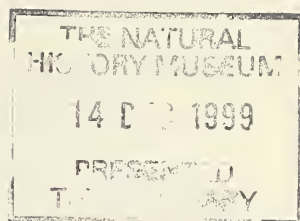




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WINNER, BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1999 (see pages 347-353):
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2 - 11 Apr '99; 19 - 28 Nov '99.

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27 Nov - 6 Dec '98; 19 - 28 Feb '99;
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31 Jan - 7 Feb '99; 4 - 11 Apr '99;
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16 - 24 May '99.

SRI LANKA - Sinharaja Forest & the Hill Country.
23 Jan - 1 Feb '99.

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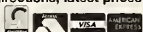
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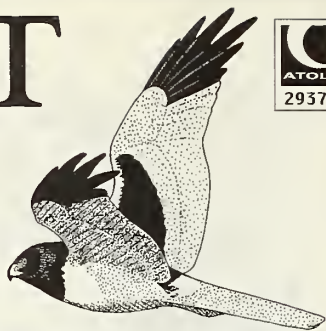
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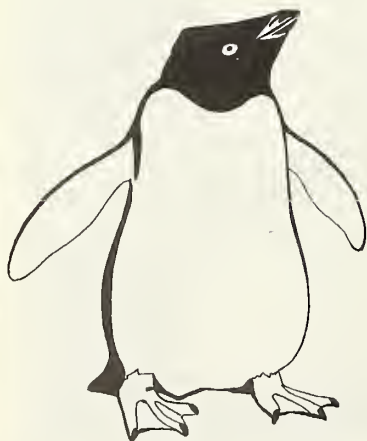
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EDITORIAL:

A NEW IMAGE

B*ritish Birds* is the longest-established monthly ornithological journal in the World, with a history spanning almost a century. At the turn of the century, when *BB* was founded, birdwatching was primarily a pursuit of the rich and eccentric, the gun was the principal tool of the scientist, and field-identification skills were in their infancy. It was an adventurous move to launch a monthly magazine devoted chiefly to the study of British birds, but Harry Witherby was a man of enormous ability and vision. He was interested in all aspects of ornithology and had travelled widely in search of birds. Through his contacts he enlisted the support of the leading ornithologists of the time and the magazine quickly established its reputation. Many of Witherby's aspirations are still embodied in the editorial policy of today. *British Birds* continues to be a 'journal of record', where information on a variety of subjects is gathered for posterity. There is still a strong emphasis on the British List and rarities, as well as on identification, status and distribution, detailed studies of individual species, and short notes presenting new or unusual observations of bird behaviour. From the beginning, contributors comprised both amateurs and professionals, and *British Birds* is the link between the nineteenth-century ornithologists who founded the BOU and the modern birdwatcher.

British Birds has evolved over the years. The first issues were just 32 pages long, and included only three or four black-and-white photographs or drawings. Today, each issue is usually twice that length and sometimes more. The number and quality of the illustrations have increased considerably, and the style and layout have changed a number of times over the years. But one thing has remained constant: the journal's format. The curious, non-standard dimensions (a little smaller than A5) are almost unique today, but still fit into the pocket. Whilst tradition is reassuring, and

the row of neatly stacked *BB*s on the shelf is pleasing to the eye, there has long been a struggle to squeeze everything into each issue. The typeface is frequently very small, and the pictures and illustrations are cropped or reduced to ensure that there is no wasted space on the page. So, although *BB* has remained pocket-sized, the cramped pages have not made for an easy read, and one sometimes has to strain to see those tertiary fringes on the photographs.

There comes a time when change is inevitable – not for its own sake, but to create genuine improvements. The decision to redesign *British Birds* now was not a difficult one, as the advantages greatly outweighed the disadvantages. Our aims in restyling *British Birds* have been quite clear: to produce clear, uncluttered and readable pages with enough room to reproduce photographs at a size that best suits them. A larger page size was the only solution. Furthermore, *British Birds* will now be printed in colour throughout. This does not mean that there will be colour photographs on every page, but having this facility means that we have more flexibility in planning the page layouts. There will certainly be more photographs in future, but these will always be relevant to the accompanying text and not included simply to fill a space. Readers will be reassured to know that the content will continue to retain the highest levels of originality and expertise that are the hallmark of the journal.

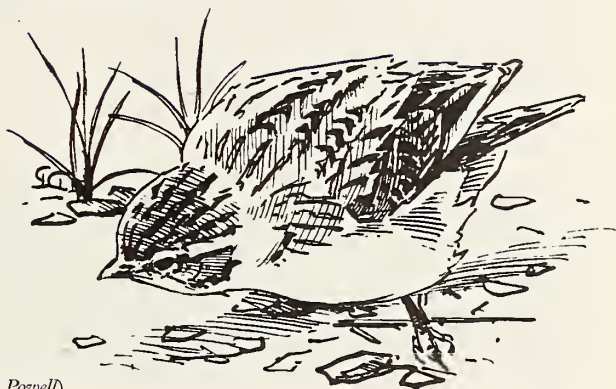
Technology has moved on exponentially since Witherby's days. *British Birds* is now embracing the latest advancements, allowing us to produce the journal entirely on screen. Without doubt, future issues of *British Birds* will show refinements in presentation, but we believe that the design being launched here is a major step forward which will show the way into the next century. Let us know what you think. We welcome your views on the new-look *BB*.

NIGEL REDMAN



REPORT ON SCARCE MIGRANT BIRDS IN BRITAIN IN 1996

PETER A. FRASER,
PETER G. LANSDOWN
& MICHAEL J. ROGERS



Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (Dan Powell)

ABSTRACT For this second annual report, covering 1996, information on assessed and accepted records has been supplied, sometimes in advance of publication in their local bird reports, by County Bird Recorders.

There were all-time record numbers of at least two species in 1996: Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (so widespread that accurate counts are not available) and Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (42 in 1996 cf. previous peak annual total of 39). There were also exceptionally high numbers, at least compared with other recent years, of Balearic Shearwaters *Puffinus mauretanicus* (1,410 cf. 937), Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis* (32 cf. 56), Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris* (390 cf. 254), Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria* (180 cf. 230), Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (116 cf. 152), European Serins *Serinus serinus* (77 cf. 80), Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrurus* (144 cf. 242) and Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana* (106 cf. 112).

The increases in numbers of Little Egrets, Short-toed Larks, Pallas's Leaf Warblers, European Serins and Common Rosefinches are the latest phases of long-term trends.

In contrast, five species were particularly scarce in Britain in 1996: Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* (47 cf. 176), European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (10 cf. 71), Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (18 cf. 57), Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (9 cf. 38) and Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (55 cf. 160).

This is the second annual report on scarce migrant birds in Britain. It follows the same format as the first report (*Brit. Birds* 90: 413-439), which covered 1995, but contains four fewer species: Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*, Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* and Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*.

Only records that have been assessed and fully accepted by the appropriate local, regional or national records panels have been included in this report. Every year, the assembly of data, which includes the records assessment process, takes much longer for some county bird reports than for others. As a result, and despite the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of nearly all of Britain's county bird recorders and their assistants, the national scarce migrant birds reports inevitably have to be published well after the year in question. Even then, most or all records from a few counties are not included; this report lacks most or all of the relevant 1996 records from Berkshire, Caithness, the Isle of May (Fife), and East, South and West Yorkshire. For some species, such uneven coverage results in incomplete statistics for the current year and, possibly, in incorrect analyses. Nevertheless, as the statistics for all the years are updated as soon as numbers are available, figures quoted for previous years are likely to be accurate.

This report covers England, Scotland and Wales. We should very much like to include records for the whole of Ireland, as well as for the whole of Britain, in future reports. To do this in a meaningful manner, we need not only to receive all of the Irish records for a current year, but also to analyse past Irish records of all species, which will take time. Nevertheless, a report on scarce migrant birds in the whole geographical area of Britain & Ireland remains our eventual aim. The counties in Northern Ireland provided 1996 records of one Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, three Common Teals *Anas crecca* of the Nearctic race *A. c. carolinensis*, three Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina*, one Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, three

Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicaria*, ten Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*, 12 Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* and two Hoopoes *Upupa epops*.



European Serin *Serinus serinus* (Stephanie L. Thorpe)

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Interpretation of the statistics used and quoted in these analyses should take into consideration the following:

1. Since 1958, the increased number of observers and their collective enhanced knowledge, improved mobility and greater amount of time spent in the field must, in part, be responsible for the increase in the numbers of some scarce migrants.
2. Known breeding birds (e.g. some Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus*) have been excluded, except in the case of Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*.
3. Individuals remaining from one year to the next (e.g. some overwintering Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris*) have been counted only in the first of the two years.
4. Returning individuals (e.g. some Ring-billed Gulls) have been counted only in their year of arrival.
5. Statistics for some species for 1996 and, to a lesser degree, for earlier recent years, are incomplete owing to the current unavailability of the data from some counties.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1980	1993	1990	1992
68	14	15	452	767	2,851	1,747	1,360	1,012

Notwithstanding an annual average of over 550 Cory's Shearwaters during the previous decade, there were fewer than 90 individuals in five of those years. By recent standards, therefore, 1996 was an average to poor year.

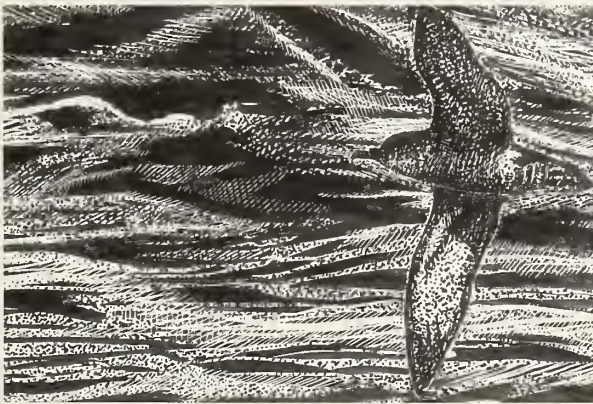
All records were from 19th May to 6th November, with over 85% from 27th June to 22nd September. Most were seen in Cornwall; the rest were widely scattered, including singles in Orkney and the Outer Hebrides.

BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Puffinus mauretanicus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1993	1995	1994
1,410	311	767	937	927	817

With 50% more Balearic Shearwaters in 1996 than in the previous record year, the already acknowledged increase in annual totals during 1986–95 has accelerated. The available data are unfortunately insufficient to enable the seasonal occurrence pattern in

1996 to be determined. In 1996, as in 1995, the Southwest was the prime area for Balearic Shearwaters: there were 862 in Cornwall, 237 in Devon and 164 in Dorset; Argyll, with 64 individuals, was the next most productive county.



Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* (Max Andrews)

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

The large number of Little Egrets now in Britain is a discouragement to county recorders, particularly those in the South, to analyse the records in detail. Some counties which provided records of other scarce migrants did not do so for Little Egret. As a result, limited data are available for 1996. Also, the long-staying tendency and

mobility of many individuals prevent an accurate assessment of numbers, even on a national scale. Nevertheless, it is clear that the population's low point in 1996 was in May; then there was a 25% increase in June, followed by further increases of 62% in July, 108% in August and 5% in September, when numbers reached a peak.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1987	1970	1981	1990
17	7	19	21	17	35	28	27	27

The occurrence patterns in 1996 were fairly typical, with over 40% of individuals being first recorded in April and the majority being seen in the southern half of England. Furthermore, the year’s total of 17 equalled the recent annual average. Nevertheless,

1996 produced two surprises: a Purple Heron unusually far north, in Northeast Scotland in June, and an abnormally late one on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, on 27th November. This became the latest record of Purple Heron in Britain, as shown in fig. 1.

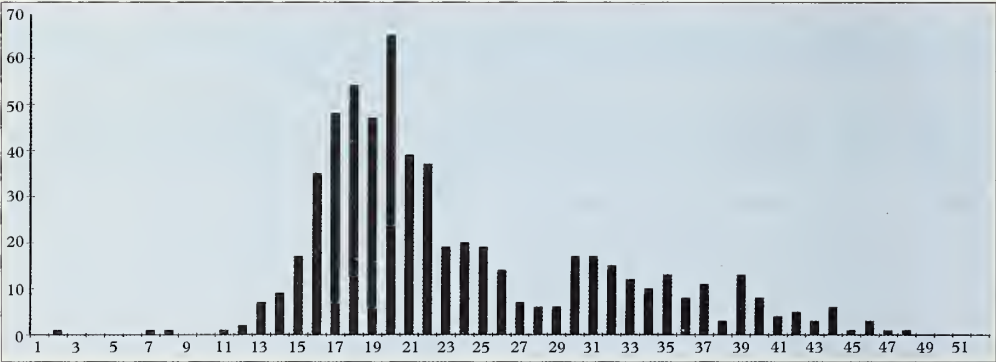


Figure 1. Numbers of Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* in Britain in each week to the end of 1996. Note the peak from mid April to early June.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1977	1986	1976	1988
22	2	17	15	14	45	45	30	29

This is a notoriously difficult species to analyse: though known escapes can be discounted, there are suspected escapes and, in most years, highly mobile individuals which become the subject of

more than one sighting. All of the White Storks recorded in 1996 were seen singly and the great majority appeared from 3rd April to 8th June, which conforms to the usual occurrence pattern.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

This most conspicuous of species and most prodigious wanderer occurs in far fewer numbers than a simple addition of British records would suggest. In 1996, as in previous years, there were several proven cases, and many suspected instances, of individuals moving both within and between counties. Assessment

of numbers, therefore, is wide open to error. Consequently, to avoid misleading statistics, all 1996 Eurasian Spoonbill records, regardless of duplication, have been counted, and the results expressed comparatively. There was a marked influx in April, when 15% of the year’s total was seen, and another in May, when the peak of

36% was registered, followed by 18% in June, 13% in July, 7% in August and 5% in September, with only 6% shared between the remaining six months. The prime county was Norfolk (with 35% of those recorded), followed by Suffolk (13%), Kent (10%), Dorset (8%), Hampshire (5%) and

Essex (4%), with records from a further 24 counties. Eurasian Spoonbills have clearly increased in Britain in recent years: the number of records in 1996 was nearly three times as great as that in 1995, which, in turn, was more than double the annual average for 1987-94.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

The annual average of 72 during 1987-91 increased to 158 during 1992-95, but the total in 1996 was only 87. Of these, 25 were first recorded during 2nd-25th August and 16 during 23rd October to 26th November. Ruddy Shelducks were seen in 27 counties,

mostly in southern and central England, but with records from Cumbria and three Scottish recording areas.

A paper on the occurrences of this species, by Keith Vinicombe and Andrew Harrop, will be published shortly.

COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca* (Nearctic race *A. c. carolinensis*)

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958-1995				Annual maxima 1958-1995			
	58-69	70-79	80-89	90-95	1995	1989	1990	1991
25	2	6	13	18	30	25	25	15

The figures exclude presumed returning individuals; the number of 'new' birds during the year was exceeded only by the total in 1995. Drake 'green-winged' Common Teals were widely scattered in 1996; not surprisingly, none was seen

between 17th May and 29th September. Records of individuals showing mixed characters of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* and the nominate race are increasing; such records are excluded from the above statistics.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

Records were received from 27 counties in England and five in Scotland. The statistics used exclude the resident breeding population at the Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, which reached a peak of 53 individuals in December, but otherwise include all records, regardless of possible duplication.

Of the 250 Red-crested Pochards reported, 43 were in January, 29 in October, 24 in both June and September, 23 in November and 20 in December, with ten or more in each of the other six months. The most productive counties, in descending numerical importance, were Sussex, Leicestershire, Suffolk, Norfolk,



1. Adult male Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, Norfolk, March 1992 (Robin Chittenden)

Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, with Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire each also attracting more than ten Red-crested Pochards.

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1980	1979	1977	1990
13	1	7	13	11	26	25	21	20

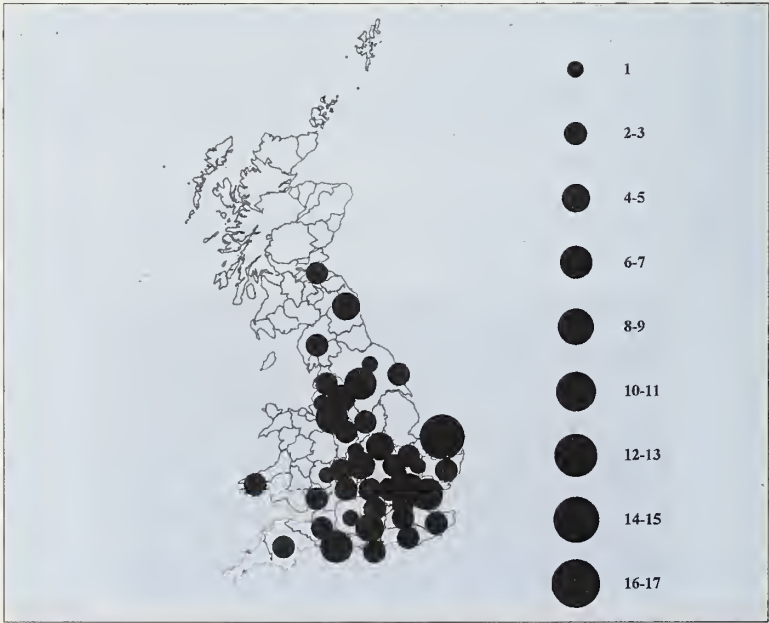
The total of 13 ‘new’ individuals in 1996, whilst by no means exceptional, equals or exceeds all annual totals since 1990. All of the year’s Ring-necked Ducks, including presumed returning birds, were recorded in England. Though most were seen in winter, individuals were observed in all months of the year. There were two at Welney, Norfolk, in October, and two at Radipole Lake, Dorset, in October and November.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1987	1986	1991
9	18	9	27	20	15

In what was an average year by recent standards, only the three which first appeared during 15th–23rd October indicated an occurrence pattern. In a typical year, all of the Ferruginous Ducks are seen in England, as illustrated in fig. 2; in 1996, however, there was one in Pembrokeshire.

In view of the very small number of individuals occurring in Britain each year, the British Birds Rarities Committee has decided to add Ferruginous Duck to its list and requests submissions of details of all reports from 1st January 1998.



Opposite page: **Figure 2.** Numbers of Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca* in each county in Britain during 1986-96. Note the very few records in Scotland, Wales and southwest England, and the inexplicable contrast between the numbers in Norfolk and absence from Lincolnshire.

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958-1995				Annual maxima 1958-1995				
	58-69	70-79	80-89	90-95	1989	1991	1993	1986	1990
9	1	5	11	12	24	18	16	15	15

This species is becoming rarer: in the last decade, the average number of new individuals each year was 16 in 1987-91 and ten in 1992-96. Apart from a male in

Northumberland, all Surf Scoters recorded in 1996 were in Scotland. Including returning birds, Fife, with a minimum of four, continues to dominate.

EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986-1995		Annual maxima 1986-1995		
	86-89	90-95	1993	1995	1994
90	60	109	167	150	95

In 1996, excluding breeding birds, there were more European Honey-buzzards in Dorset than in any other county, as illustrated in fig. 3, which also shows the wider, typically southern and

eastern, distribution. The earliest individual was in Hampshire on 21st April, while the latest was in Lincolnshire on the surprisingly early date of 27th September.

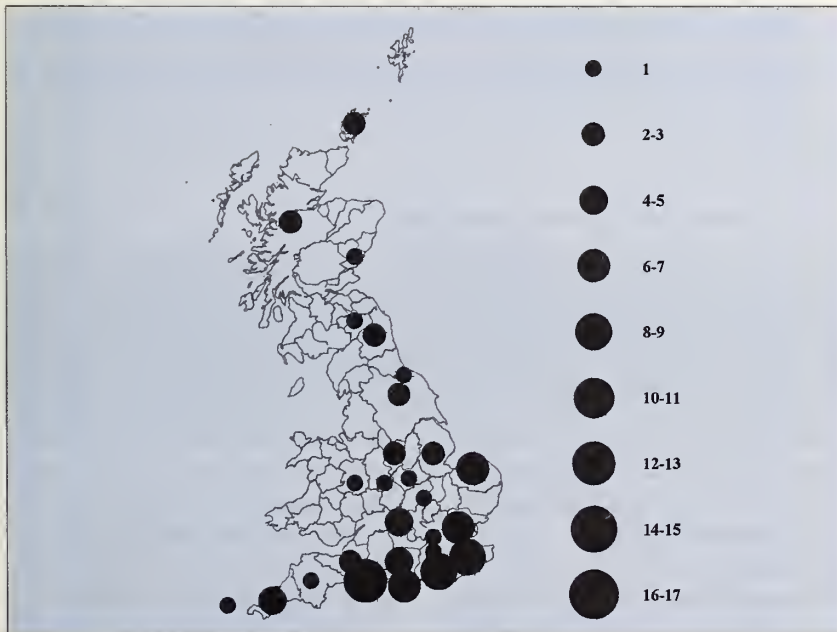


Figure 3. Numbers of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the favoured counties in southern and eastern England.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1978–1995		Annual maxima 1978–1995		
	78–89	90–95	1994	1988	1995
45	26	72	235	85	75

The species' normal English east coast bias was again evident in 1996, as shown in fig. 4; more than two-thirds of the year's Rough-legged Buzzards were seen in Norfolk and Suffolk. Of the 45 recorded, no fewer than 28

were first seen during 17th March to 28th April. There were no autumn records, and the only individuals in the second winter period were singles in Huntingdonshire on 21st December and Norfolk on 31st December.



Figure 4. Numbers of Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the very few wanderers away from East Anglia.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1995	1988	1989
69	69	53	111	79	78

In 1996, although the total of 69 was less than that of the previous year, more were seen than in any other year since 1989. Following an early individual on 24th March in Suffolk, there were only two in May and singles in June and July. The main passage period was from 10th August to 22nd October, when there were 63 Spotted Crakes, of which 21 were in August (with

15 during 16th–23rd), 33 in September (with 11 on 1st and nine during 21st–25th) and nine in October. The last one of the year was on 1st November, in Cleveland. In 1996, 24 Spotted Crakes were recorded in Cornwall, 12 in Scilly and 11 in Hampshire, with no more than four in any other county; the English south coast counties attracted 56 of the 69 individuals.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1963	1982	1985	1988
38	63	18	56	29	685	200	103	51

The 38 in 1996 was an average total for a non-invasion year. The records were typically widely scattered, with East Anglia once again attracting more than any other region, as illustrated in fig. 5. Though ‘new’

Common Cranes were recorded in all months except February and August, there was an obvious passage in spring, during 12th April to 2nd June, when parties of four were seen in both Norfolk and Suffolk.

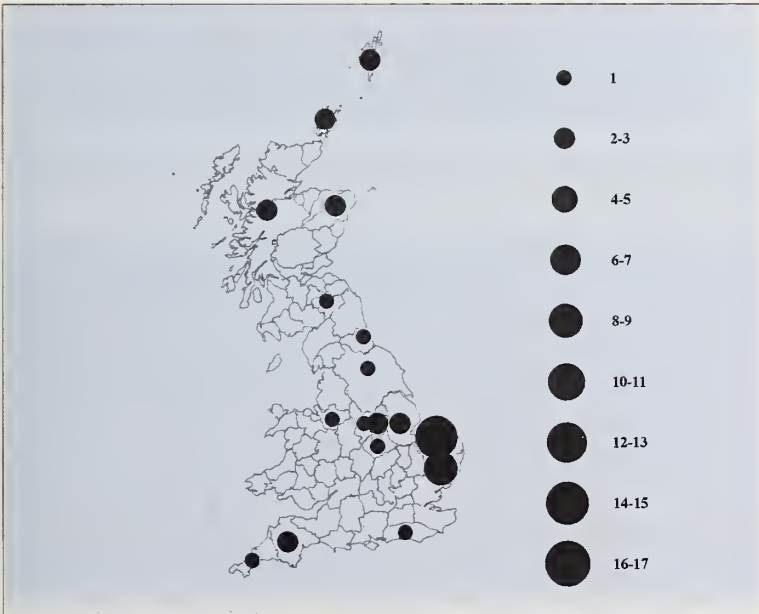


Figure 5. Numbers of Common Cranes *Grus grus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the proportionally high numbers in Norfolk and Suffolk.

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1993	1991	1994
35	28	39	58	42	38

It was ‘back to normal’ in 1996, following a low total the previous year. Most were seen on the south coast of England, as shown in fig. 6; Devon, with seven, and Dorset and Sussex, with five each, were the favoured counties. The regular wintering female returned to Lancashire and, except for a female in Kent on 17th

October, ‘new’ individuals appeared in clusters: 16 during 27th March to 17th April; eight during 13th May to 5th June, four during 17th–24th July and six during 3rd–27th August. No Kentish Plovers were seen in September, a month in which there used to be small, but significant, influxes, as illustrated in fig. 7.



Figure 6. Numbers of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the largely coastal distribution and the southerly bias in the records.

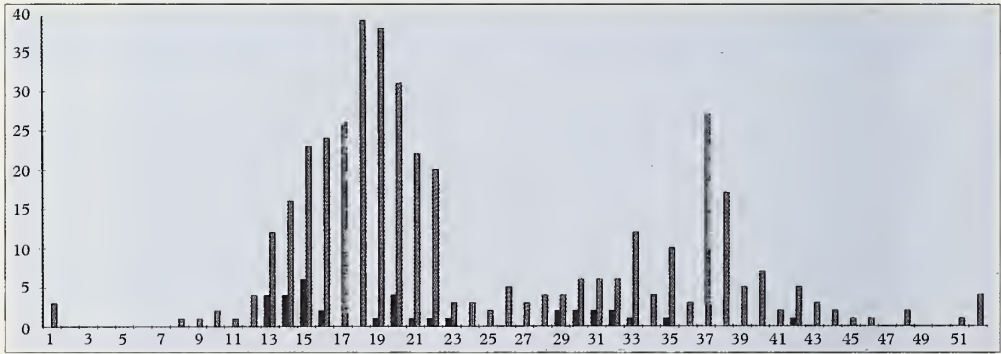


Figure 7. Numbers of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* in Britain in each week in 1996 (solid) and from 1986 to 1996 (shaded). Note the absence of September arrivals in 1996.

TEMMINCK’S STINT *Calidris temminckii*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1987	1989	1977	1991
47	66	100	98	176	119	118	112

The 47 in 1996 was the lowest annual total since 1971. More were seen in Norfolk than in any other county in both spring and autumn; the species’ generally southeasterly distribution is illustrated in fig. 8. Typically, over half of the year’s Temminck’s Stints appeared in May, with a concentration of 21 during 12th–20th May. An unusually early individual was in

Northamptonshire on 7th April, while a notable record involved three in Shropshire on 1st July. There has been a recent change in seasonal distribution: in each year from 1986 to 1993, the number of individuals in spring was more than double the number in autumn; in 1994, 1995 and 1996, numbers in spring exceeded, but were never double, those in autumn, as illustrated in fig. 9.



Figure 8. Numbers of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note Norfolk's dominance.

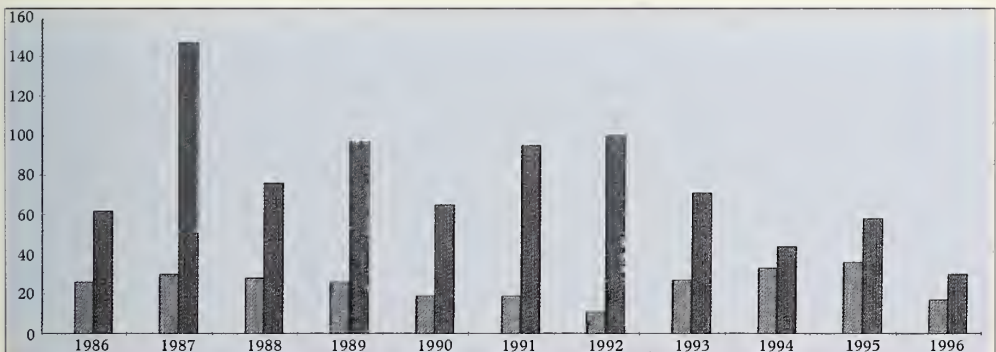


Figure 9. Numbers of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in Britain in autumn (shaded) and spring (solid) in each year during 1986-96. Note the more equal numbers in spring and autumn during 1994-96.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968-1995			Annual maxima 1968-1995			
	68-79	80-89	90-95	1984	1983	1988	1982
52	36	67	48	122	86	84	78

Considering the differing weather patterns from autumn to autumn, which one might expect to produce sometimes favourable and sometimes unfavourable conditions for crossing the Atlantic, annual totals have been surprisingly consistent throughout the current decade. Fewer Pectoral Sandpipers are seen annually now than previously: the eight years 1982-89 included the five best

years ever for the species in Britain. Norfolk is usually the most-favoured county, followed by Cornwall, as illustrated in fig. 10, and this was so again in 1996, with Cheshire and Scilly close behind. As shown in fig. 11, the normal seasonal distribution was also mirrored in 1996, with the period 4th September to 7th October producing over 70% of the year's records.

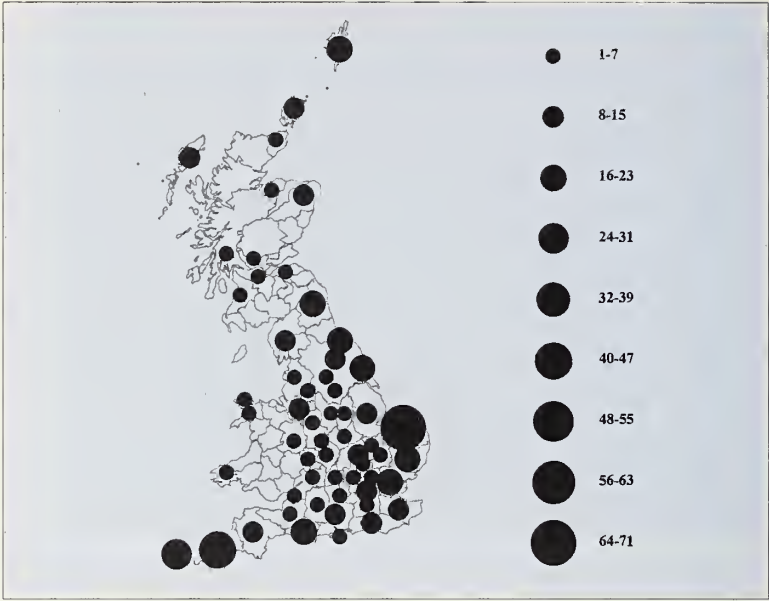


Figure 10. Numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in each county in Britain from 1986 to 1995. Note the prominence of Norfolk, Cornwall and Scilly.

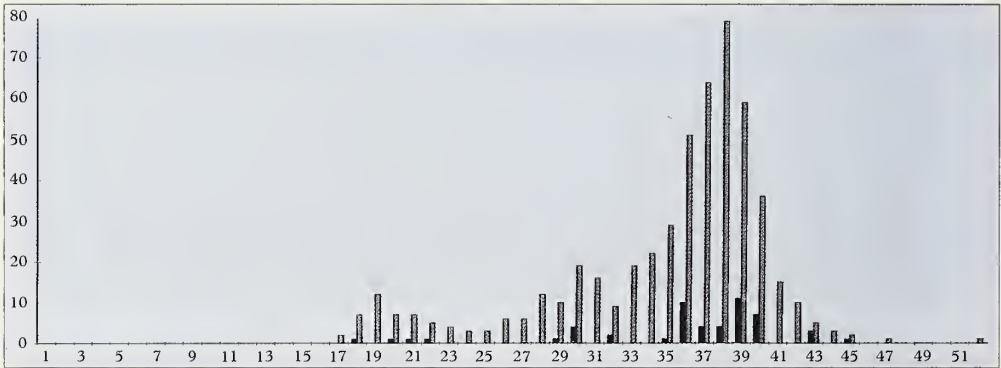


Figure 11. Numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in Britain in each week in 1996 (solid) and from 1986 to 1995 (shaded). Note the high numbers in September and early October.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1977	1975	1980	1985
32	2	20	18	13	56	45	29	27

The year’s total of 32 was the highest since 1977, though the annual average for 1990–96 still remains lower than that for either of the two previous decades. The distribution of Buff-breasted Sandpiper in 1996 had an unusual northerly bias, as illustrated in fig. 12, with the favoured

counties being the Outer Hebrides, Argyll and Lothian, and Scotland as a whole playing host to 19 of the 32 individuals. In 1996, the extreme arrival dates were 5th August and 12th October, with the majority (75%) typically appearing in September.



Figure 12. Numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the abnormally northerly distribution.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1986	1989	1992
22	42	32	62	44	40

The sequence of low annual totals continues: the three least productive years since analysis began in 1986 were 1993, 1994 and 1996. In 1996, the only counties with more than one Red-necked Phalarope, excluding breeding birds, were Norfolk, with four, Orkney, with three, and

Cheshire and Suffolk, with two each; all were seen singly. Following an early individual in Cornwall on 16th March, there were five in May, three in late June, three in the first half of July, five in August and four in early September, with the last one, in Avon, on 21st September.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicaria*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1989	1987	1988
240	280	166	363	362	323

This species presents a perplexing set of annual totals: 73 in 1986, 266–363 during 1987–91, 45–85 during 1992–94, and 235–240 during 1995–96. In 1996, as is usually the case, Cornwall was comfortably the dominant county, as shown in fig. 13, attracting just over half of all of the year's

Grey Phalaropes. The seasonal distribution was fairly typical, with 31 individuals from 3rd January to 13th March and 206 from 9th September to 29th November; one was in Shetland during 2nd–4th June and there were singles in Cornwall on 22nd and 24th August.



Figure 13. Numbers of Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicaria* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note Cornwall’s dominance.

SABINE’S GULL *Larus sabini*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1987	1988	1983	1989
101	47	199	94	710	346	283	178

Annual totals continue to remain remarkably stable in the 1990s. In 1996, more Sabine’s Gulls were seen in Cornwall (41) than in any other county, as illustrated in fig. 15; the next most prominent counties were Norfolk, with 12 individuals, and Devon and Scilly, with six each. The great majority (95) were observed during 18th August to 10th

November, as shown in fig. 14, with October accounting for 64 of these; there were four during 20th May to 28th July and singles in the Outer Hebrides on the early date of 4th February and in Cornwall on the late date of 2nd December. Of the 101 individuals, 19 were aged as adult, four as first-year and 60 as juvenile, with 18 not aged.

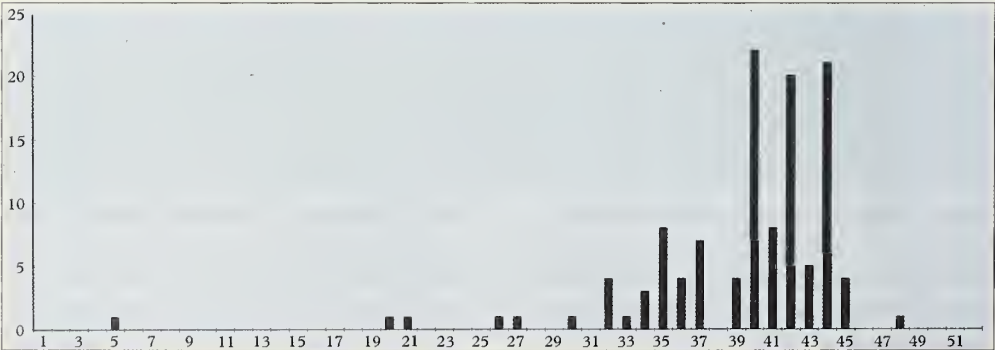


Figure 14. Numbers of Sabine’s Gulls *Larus sabini* in Britain in each week in 1996. Note the main passage period during 18th August to 10th November, and the particular prominence of October.

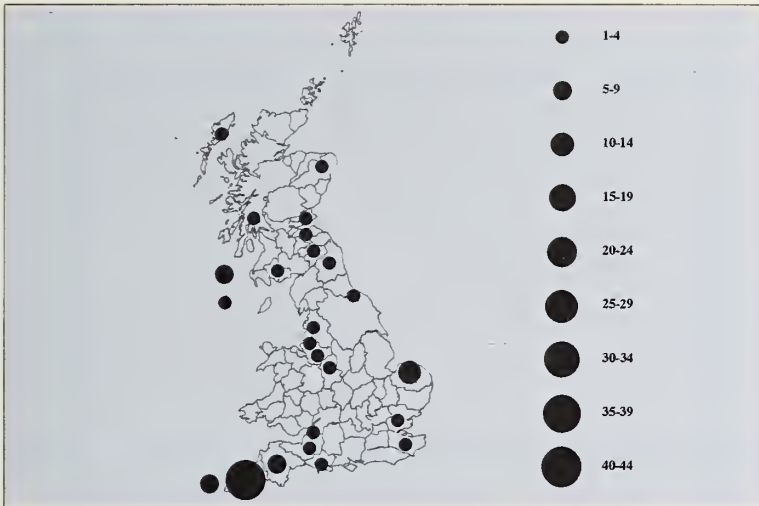


Figure 15. Numbers of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the traditional prominence of the southwest.

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1992	1990	1995	1991
49	0	4	50	80	103	94	80	78

The total of 49 'new' individuals in 1996 represents the lowest such annual total since the 48 in 1988 and, before that, the 47 in 1983. Once again, more were seen in Cornwall than in any other county, as

illustrated in fig. 16. The prime arrival time for Ring-billed Gulls in 1996 was during 13th March to 13th April; only three 'new' individuals were discovered between 3rd May and 2nd October.

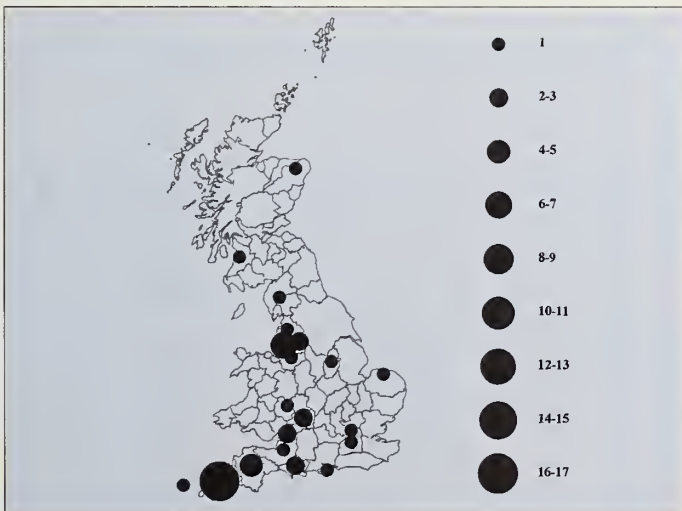


Figure 16. Numbers of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the expected western, particularly southwestern, bias in the occurrence pattern.

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1991	1995	1987	1988
10	4	6	20	30	71	38	36	32

Following the second-best-ever annual total of 38 in 1995, the ten in 1996 was especially disappointing; it was the lowest annual total since ten in 1982. In 1996, all ten were seen in England, with individuals in Cumbria and Greater Manchester the most northerly. Except for Cornwall, with three singles, no county attracted more than one individual. An early vagrant was in Oxfordshire on 9th April, followed by six during 25th May to 4th June, one on 12th July and further singles on 15th and 18th August.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1968	1980	1977	1988
129	116	132	125	216	187	178	167

The 129 in 1996 equalled the annual average for the period 1980-95. The expected English south coast bias was evident again in 1996, as illustrated in fig. 17, with the most-favoured counties, in descending numerical order, being Cornwall, Dorset, Scilly, Devon and Sussex; the first two of these each hosted over 20% of the year's Hoopoes. The main passage period was during 24 th March to 6th May, when 96 were seen, with one earlier in March and a further 13 later in May. Unseasonal records involved singles during 15th-19th January in Cambridgeshire and on 21st November in Cornwall; otherwise, there were nine in September and two each in June, July, August and October.

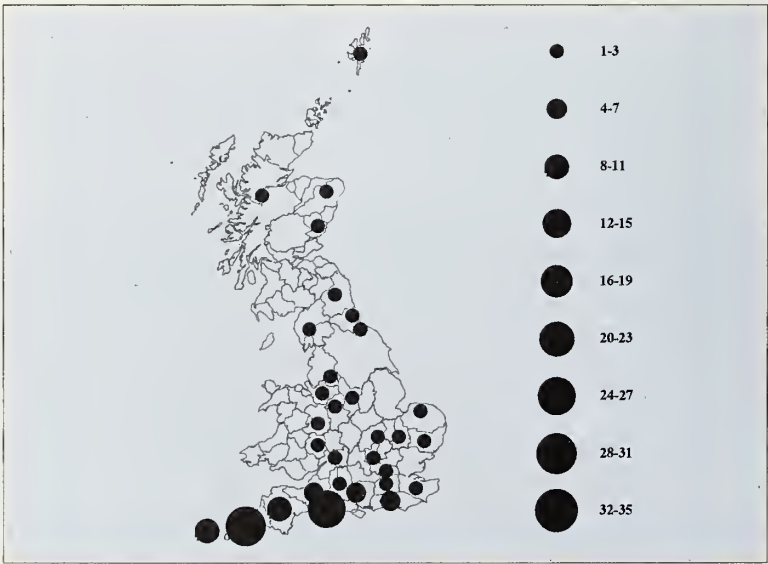


Figure 17. Numbers of Hoopoes *Upupa epops* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the southwesterly bias in the distribution.



2. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Norfolk, September 1998 (Robin Chittenden)

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1987	1988	1995
237	301	237	353	314	314

The 237 in 1996 equalled the annual average for the previous six years. In spring, there was a northerly bias to the records, as illustrated in fig. 19, with Shetland, Norfolk and Orkney the prime counties, in descending numerical order. Although more Wrynecks were seen in spring than in any other year since 1987, the autumn migration was once again the heavier. There was a southerly bias

to the records at this season, as shown in fig. 20, and Norfolk, Sussex and Scilly were the most productive counties, in descending order of prominence. Spring passage took place mainly from mid April to mid May, with autumn migrants appearing largely from mid August to late September, as illustrated in fig. 18. A Wryneck in Scilly during 8th–12th December was most unseasonal.

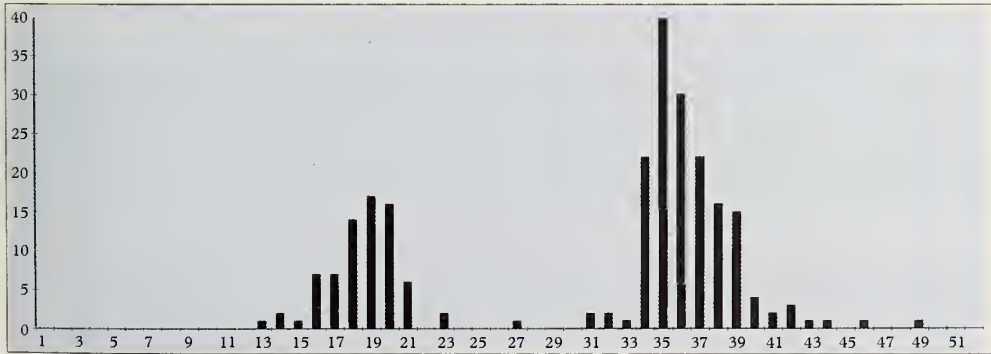


Figure 18. Numbers of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in Britain in each week in 1996. Note the good spring passage and the typically heavier autumn migration.

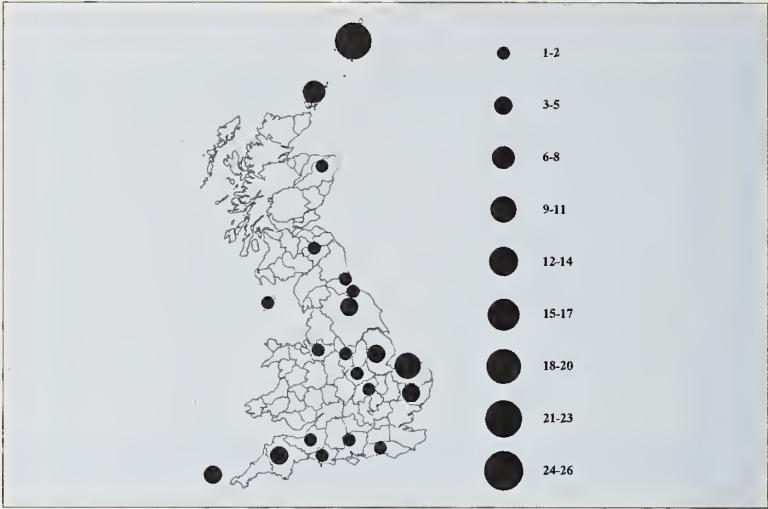


Figure 19. Numbers of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in each county in Britain in spring 1996. Note the northerly bias to the records.



Figure 20. Numbers of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in each county in Britain in autumn 1996. Note the southerly bias to the records.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995				
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1995	1991	1975	1993
42	5	11	13	25	39	28	27	21	21

During 1967 to 1996, more Short-toed Larks were seen in spring than in autumn in only four years: in 1974, as a result of the poorest number in any autumn during the period, and in 1993, 1994 and 1996, as a result of a dramatic upsurge in numbers in spring. In

1996, a record-breaking year overall and for numbers in spring, ten were first recorded during 22nd–29th April and 11 during 11th May to 7th June; there was one on St Martin’s, Scilly, on 8th July; and seven were first observed during 9th–19th September

and eight during 30th September to 17th October. As illustrated in figs. 21 and 22, the spring passage, though restricted to coastal counties, was more widespread than the migration in autumn, when individuals

were seen only at Britain's extremities; the only ones on the mainland in autumn were in west Cornwall. Of the 42 Short-toed Larks in 1996, 19 were in Scilly, nine in Shetland and five in Cornwall.



Figure 21. Numbers of Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* in each county in Britain in spring 1996. Note the significant numbers in Scilly.



Figure 22. Numbers of Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* in each county in Britain in autumn 1996. Note the absence of records between Cornwall and Orkney.

HORNED LARK *Eremophila alpestris*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1987–1995		Annual maxima 1987–1995		
	87–89	90–95	1994	1995	1993
390	89	152	254	164	143

The 390 in 1996 was the highest annual total since analysis began in 1987. Only eight new individuals were recorded up to 8th February, with five more, all in Norfolk, during 31st March to 29th April, and two in Derbyshire during 24th-29th May. There was one on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 18th September, and two there during 22nd-23rd September, but the main arrivals were in



Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* (Dan Powell)

the last three months of the year, with 155 in October, 104 in November and 113 in December. The East Coast attracted most Horned Larks, as usual, with 122 in Suffolk, 93 in Lincolnshire, 89 in Norfolk, 27 in Kent, 19 in Essex and 16 in North Yorkshire. The top county otherwise was, surprisingly, Worcestershire, with five individuals, all during 15th October to 14th November.

RICHARD’S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1995	1988	1968
110	35	52	65	143	338	157	144	141

There have been just nine years, in three distinct clusters, when the total has exceeded 100: 1967, 1968 and 1970; 1987 and 1988; and 1992, 1994, 1995 and 1996. In 1996, there were singles in Caernarfonshire on 16th January and in Devon during 3rd-8th April; from two to 14 had been seen in spring in each of the previous seven years. All of the other Richard’s Pipits in 1996 were first discovered during 14th

September to 30th November, with 21 in September, 67 in October and 20 in November. As shown in fig. 23, the favoured counties were Norfolk, Cornwall and Shetland, with 24, 22 and 17 individuals, respectively. Over the years, Kent has attracted more Richard’s Pipits in spring than any other county; in autumn, when numbers are always much higher, Norfolk is clearly the prime county.

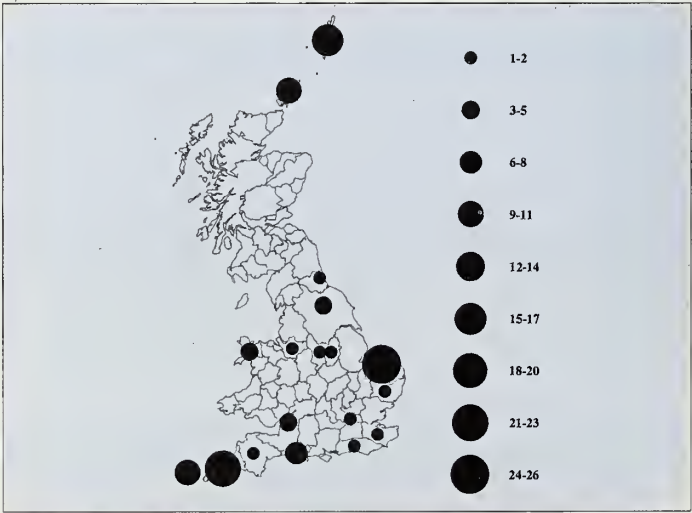


Figure 23. Numbers of Richard’s Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note Norfolk’s prominence and the scattering of inland records.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–95				Annual maxima 1958–95			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1992	1983	1977	1993
18	13	27	35	37	57	56	45	44

There were three in spring and 15 in autumn, as illustrated in fig. 24. The prime months were September, when seven appeared, and October, when five arrived. The total of 18 in 1996 represented the lowest annual total since

1978. The favoured counties were Dorset, with six, and Norfolk, with four. A Tawny Pipit on Out Skerries, Shetland, during 20th–30th September was unusually far north for this predominantly southern species.

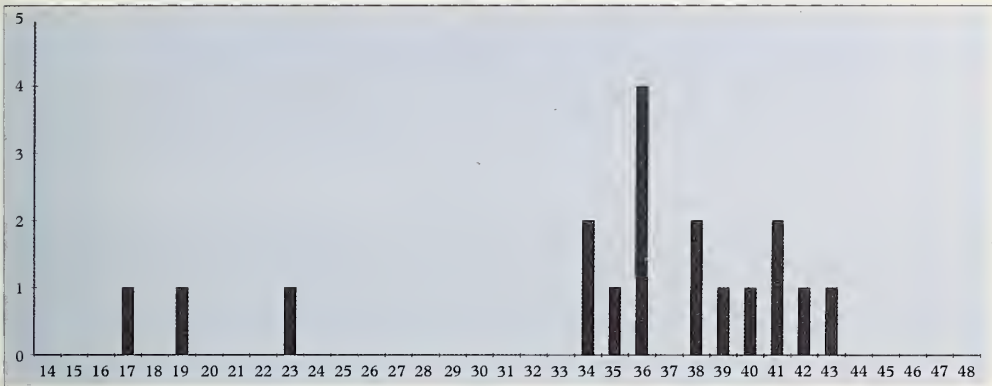


Figure 24. Numbers of Tawny Pipits *Anthus campestris* in Britain in each week in 1996. Note the wide spread of records and the peak in early September.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1985	1981	1987	1993
123	91	173	128	535	318	251	240

Though the 1996 total of 123 was the lowest annual total since 1992, it was close to the average for the years 1990–95. In 1996, there were 100 in spring, including 82 during 6th–27th May, and 23 in autumn, including 17 during 6th–27th September. The first of the year was on 23rd March, in Sussex; none was seen between 6th July and 6th September; and the last one was on 10th November, in Hampshire. Shetland, with 43 Bluethroats in 1996, was

the dominant county in both spring and autumn. The species' northerly distribution was underlined by the next most-favoured counties being Northumberland and Orkney, where there were 16 and 15 respectively.

There were six individuals of the white-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* recorded in 1996. During 1968 to 1996, more of this race were recorded in spring in Kent than in any other county, as illustrated in fig. 25.

Overleaf: **Figure 25.** Numbers of Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* of the white-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* in Britain in spring in each county during 1968–96. Note its East Coast distribution, particularly the prominence of southeast England.



SAVI’S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–82 86–89	90–95	1980	1978	1979	1977
9	4	21	22	14	38	36	32	29

The nine in 1996 was the second-lowest annual total since 1967 and signalled a fourth consecutive poor year. One lingered for 11 days in Dorset, another for nine days in Norfolk and a third individual for eight days on Fair Isle, Shetland. Two Savi’s Warblers were seen in only two counties (Dorset and Suffolk) but, in both, they were singles at different localities. The first for the year was on

28th April in Suffolk; two were discovered in May, two in June and three in July; and the last one was on 25th September, in Devon.

In view of the very small number of individuals occurring in Britain each year, the British Birds Rarities Committee has decided to add Savi’s Warbler to its list and requests submission of details of all reports from 1st January 1998.

AQUATIC WARBLER *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1976	1991	1972	1975
30	10	40	22	49	102	62	61	55

The 30 in 1996 represented the lowest total so far in the 1990s, yet exceeded all but two of the annual totals in the 1980s. There were no reports away from the English south coast counties, as shown in fig. 26; Cornwall, with 14, attracted

nearly half of those recorded during the year. There were 16 Aquatic Warblers during 4th–19th August, four during 25th–28th August, five during 2nd–8th September and five during 15th–23rd September.



Figure 26. Numbers of Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the absence of records away from the English south coast counties.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1992	1994	1991
52	32	63	102	72	56

The statistics exclude birds from Britain's small breeding population. At least 39 of the year's total of 52 were recorded during 20th May to 15th June; the remainder were seen on 22nd and 30th June and in all months from July to October, with the last individuals on 21st October in Cornwall and during 23rd–30th October in Scilly. Kent

was the favoured county in 1996, with 19 Marsh Warblers, followed by Shetland and Sussex, with eight and five, respectively. Numbers in spring have been consistently higher during 1994–96 than during 1989–91, as illustrated in fig. 27, while numbers in autumn have been lower during 1994–96 than during 1991–93, as shown in fig. 28.

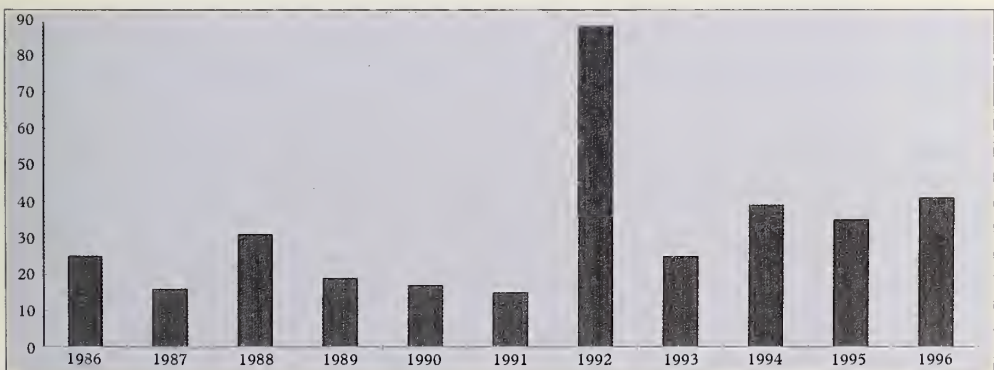


Figure 27. Numbers of Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* in Britain in spring in each year during 1986–96. Note the peak in 1992 and the consistently high numbers during 1994–96.

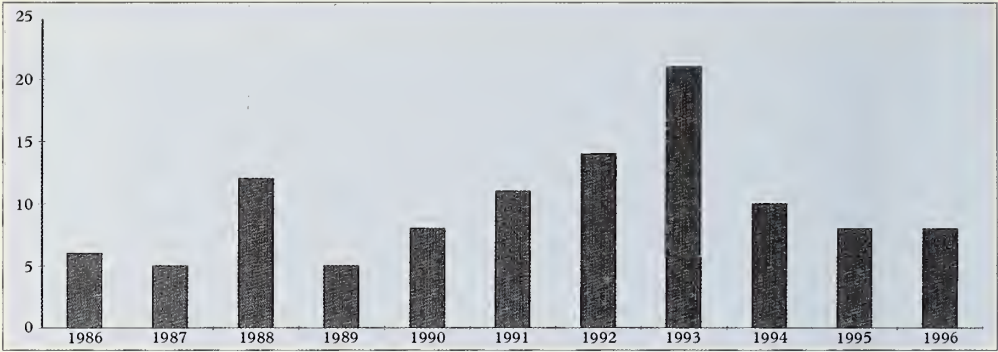


Figure 28. Numbers of Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* in Britain in autumn in each year during 1986-96. Note the peak in 1993 and the rather low numbers in 1995 and 1996.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1992	1995	1977	1984
88	74	101	138	276	171	168	155

The 88 in 1996 represented the lowest annual total since 1991. The first for the year was on 3rd May, in Orkney, and there were a further 17 in spring, during 18th May to 12th June. In autumn, 68 were discovered during 6th August to 6th October, with late individuals from 14th to 25th October in Scilly and 2nd-4th November in Devon. The spring total had been exceeded in only five previous

years, but it was a below-average autumn for the species, with 17 of the previous 22 years producing a higher number at that season. The distribution of Icterine Warblers in 1996 was typical, and is shown in fig. 29. The favoured counties were Shetland, with 22 (including six in spring), Norfolk, with 21 (including two in spring), and Orkney, with ten (including two in spring).

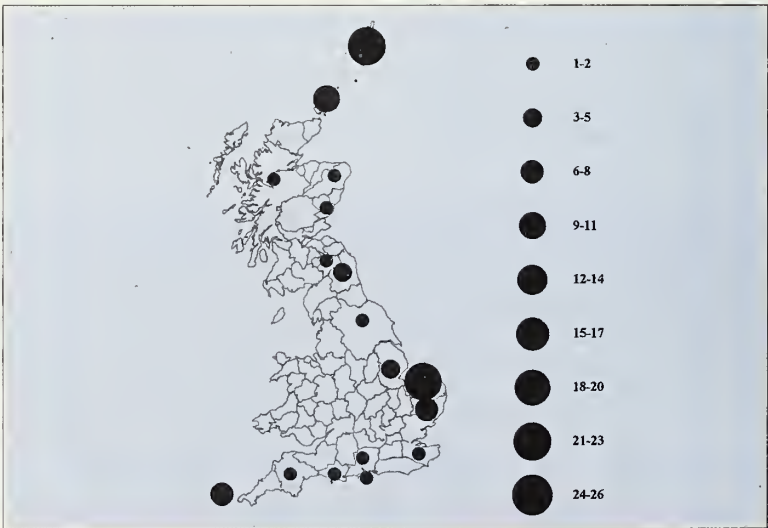


Figure 29. Numbers of Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the typical Northern Isles and East Coast prominence, with the usual scattering of records from the English south coast counties.

MELODIOUS WARBLER *Hippolais polyglotta*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1981	1983	1979	1977
40	29	39	31	60	54	53	51

The last year with a higher annual total than the 40 in 1996 was 1983, though there have been seven other years since then with a total of 35 or more. There were six in spring, during 19th May to 14th June, and 34 in autumn, all but one during 15th August to 5th October, with the last individual on 13th October in Cornwall. The customary southerly distribution pattern was again evident in

1996, as illustrated in fig. 30: Scilly, with 19, attracted nearly half of the total number for the year, while there were seven in Cornwall and three each in Devon and Sussex. Exceptions to the norm were two on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, in June, singles in Lancashire and on the Isle of Man in September, and, most notably, two on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 20th August.

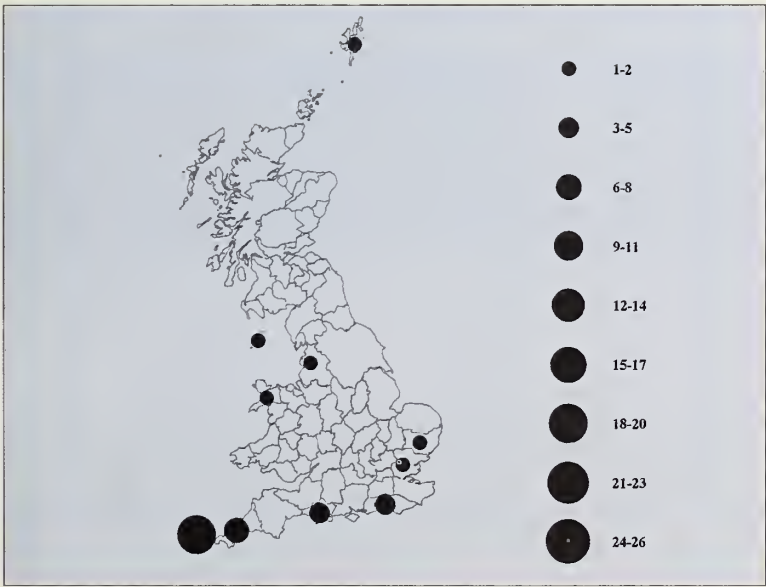


Figure 30. Numbers of Melodious Warblers *Hippolais polyglotta* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the traditional southerly and southwesterly distribution.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1995	1975	1992
180	132	104	148	230	190	178	171

This species is occurring in greater numbers than ever before: 1994, 1995 and 1996 have provided the three highest annual totals recorded. There were 167 from 7th August,

when one was found in Orkney, to 1st October, eight during 6th-17th October, and five during 22nd-29th October, when the last individual was discovered in Cornwall.

More than half of the year's Barred Warblers were seen in the Northern Isles, with 73 in Shetland and 23 in Orkney; Norfolk, with 35, and Suffolk, with eight, were the only other counties where more

than four were recorded. The year's distribution is shown in fig. 31: notable records include singles in Greater London, Monmouthshire, Anglesey, the Isle of Man and the Outer Hebrides.



Figure 31. Numbers of Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the prominence of Shetland, Norfolk and Orkney.

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1982	1988	1995
116	3	8	36	55	152	107	63	60

It is worthwhile underlining the above statistics by adding that the highest annual totals during 1958-69 and 1970-79 were 17 and 28 respectively; during 1980-89, the best three years produced 107, 63 and 59 individuals; and during 1990-96 the three highest totals were 152, 116 and 60. The species clearly continues its long-term increase in Britain in autumn. A Pallas's Leaf Warbler on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, on 19th September 1996

was exceptionally early. This was followed by 67 individuals during 13th-31st October (including 43 found during 23rd-26th), 45 during 8th-18th November (including 38 discovered during 10th-15th), and three found on 22nd-23rd November. Southern and southeastern England provided the majority of records in 1996, as illustrated in fig. 32, the most prominent counties being Norfolk (29), Suffolk (17), Dorset (14), Kent (13) and Sussex (nine).

Opposite page: **Figure 32.** Numbers of Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the prominence of East Anglia and the South Coast.



YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1988	1985	1986	1994
373	65	303	317	739	495	457	436

As shown in fig. 33, annual totals continue their general increase, with no sign of a return to pre-1984 levels. During 1968-83, the yearly average was 73, with totals varying from 26 to 157; during 1984-96, the annual average was 378 and totals ranged from 211 to 739. On 10th January 1996, three individuals were discovered, in Hampshire (two) and Devon. There were 366 Yellow-browed Warblers seen during 14th September

to 17th November, including clusters of 62 during 18th-23rd September, 118 during 13th-26th October and 31 on 31st October or 1st November. There were three more in late November and one was observed in Devon during 14th-30th December. As in 1995, Britain's extremities again proved attractive to this species, with the favoured counties being Scilly (102), Shetland (69), Cornwall (37), Dorset (25) and Norfolk (23).

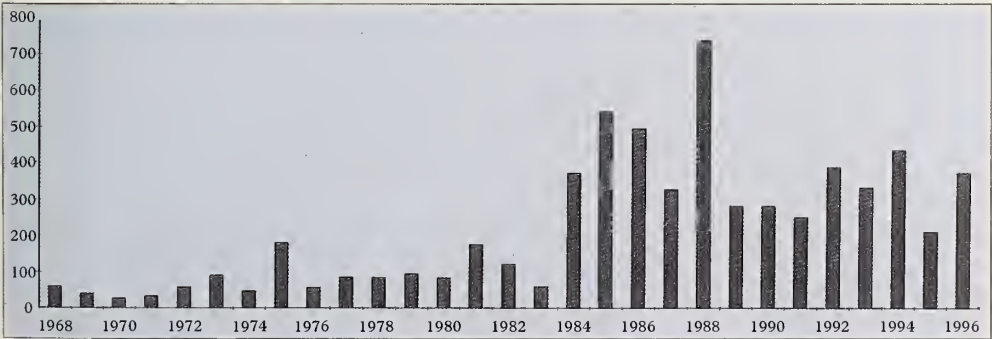


Figure 33. Numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* in Britain in each year during 1968-96. Note the dramatic increase in numbers after 1983.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1984	1976	1989	1988
97	68	107	90	178	143	128	127

Numbers in the 1990s continue to be somewhat lower than those in the 1980s, when four of the five highest annual totals during 1968-96 were achieved. Just four Red-breasted Flycatchers were recorded in spring, during 19th May to 7th June, in Orkney (two), Shetland and Fife. In only four years during the previous 21 have the spring totals been lower than in

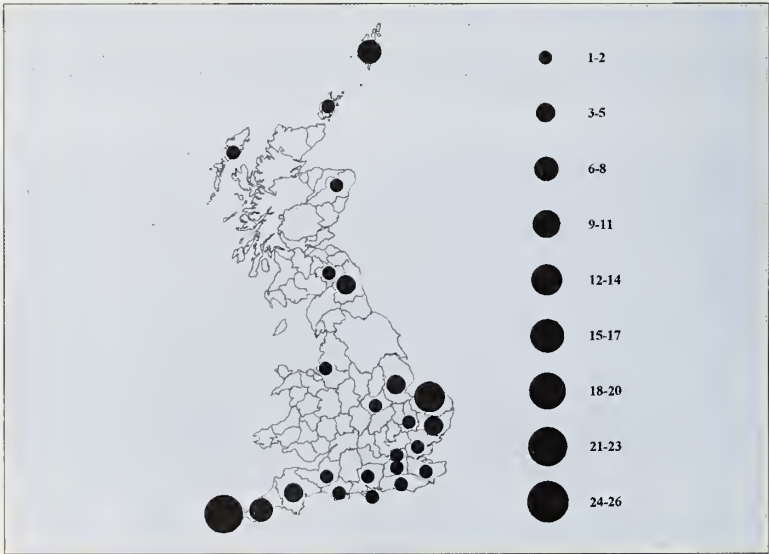
1996. There were 93 individuals found during 28th August to 2nd November, with two in August, 58 in September (including 44 discovered during 17th-23rd), 31 in October (including 25 first seen during 10th-25th) and two in November (both in Scilly). The favoured counties were Scilly (18), Norfolk (17), Shetland (12) and Northumberland (ten).

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1992	1990	1993
80	47	83	143	231	183	147	141

The statistics exclude birds at breeding sites. Numbers of Golden Orioles in Britain are prone to great fluctuations from year to year. Four of the years in the 1990s, with totals ranging from 141 to 231, average 176 individuals per year, while the other three years, with totals varying from 56 to 98, average just 78 annually. In 1996, there were 66 Golden

Orioles during 20th April to 9th June, with four more later in June, four in July, two in August, three in early September, and one on the Isle of Wight on the very late date of 18th November. As illustrated in fig. 34, Scilly was the most favoured county, as usual, followed, in descending order of numerical importance, by Norfolk, Cornwall and Shetland.



Opposite page: **Figure 34.** Numbers of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the customary prominence of Scilly, where all of the records were in April and May.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1988	1992	1989
240	252	205	423	362	226

The 1996 total of 240 is the third-highest annual total during the eleven-year period of analysis and, together with the 220 in 1995, indicates a slight improvement in the species' fortunes. There were 124 Red-backed Shrikes seen during 11th May to 23rd June (with 85 of these during 18th–27th May), three during 7th–11th July, 105 during 1st August to 6th October (with 22 of these during 13th–15th August) and seven during 16th–29th October, with a late individual on 1st November in Cornwall. As illustrated in

figs. 35 and 36, numbers in spring are prone to greater variation than those in autumn, with the exceptional numbers in spring 1988 and spring 1992 contributing to the two highest annual totals during 1986–96. The steadier autumn numbers in fig. 36 show a gradual improvement from the low-point in 1990. Shetland, with 66 Red-backed Shrikes, was the most favoured county in 1996 (as it was in 1995), followed by Norfolk (with 35 individuals), Orkney (24), Northeast Scotland (15) and Suffolk (11).

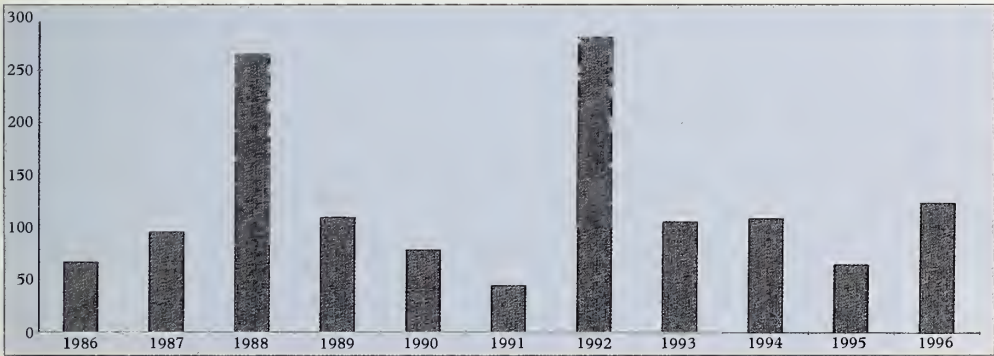


Figure 35. Numbers of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in Britain in spring in each year during 1986–96. Note the very high totals in 1988 and 1992.

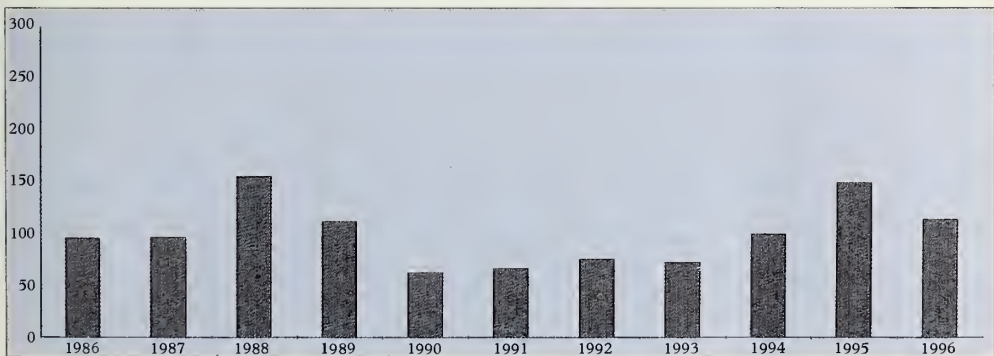


Figure 36. Numbers of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in Britain in autumn in each year during 1986–96. Note the gradual increase in numbers since 1990.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1986–1995		Annual maxima 1986–1995		
	86–89	90–95	1990	1991	1989
55	129	130	160	160	142

Numbers of this species continue to fall: during 1987–94, the lowest annual total was 115, in 1994, and this was followed by 87 in 1995 and only 55 in 1996. In the first winter period, 30 Great Grey Shrikes were seen up to 14th April, when one was in Shetland; there were singles on 21st May in Orkney

and on 1st–2nd June in Shetland; 23 individuals were observed from 21st September, when singles were found in Borders and Norfolk, to the end of the year. Shetland, with six, and Sussex, with five, were the only counties which hosted more than four Great Grey Shrikes.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE *Lanius senator*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995					
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1995	1988	1986	1968	1981	1993
16	12	12	16	19	27	26	25	24	24	24

Following the record-breaking 27 in 1995, the total of 16 in 1996 was disappointing. In 1996, there were eight Woodchat Shrikes from 27th April, when one was in Greater London, to 6th June; singles were seen on 25th June in Highland and during 2nd–5th July in Norfolk; five were observed during

13th August to 16th September; and a late individual was in Cornwall during 3rd–5th November. As illustrated in fig. 37, Scilly was the most favoured county, with four Woodchat Shrikes, while the four in Scotland and the singles in Greater London and inland in Wales were noteworthy.

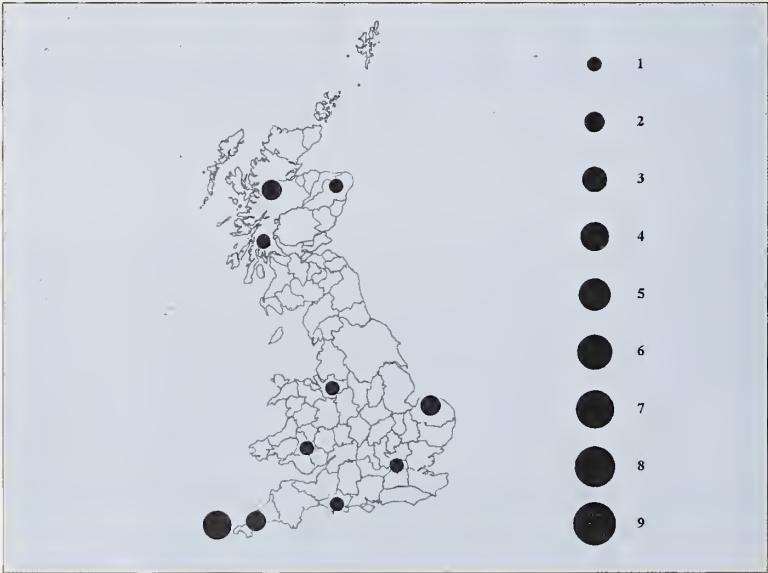


Figure 37. Numbers of Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note the prominence of the extreme Southwest and the otherwise scattered records.

EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1994	1993	1990	1995
77	8	19	37	64	80	71	69	64

Records of European Serin continue to increase. The 77 in 1996 represents the second-best annual total, the top six annual totals all having been recorded during 1990–96, as shown in fig. 38. In 1996, although individuals were seen in all months except February and August, there were concentrations in spring, when there were 33 during 22nd March to 12th May and six during 24th May to 8th June, and

autumn, when there were 31 during 21st September to 23rd November. Fig. 39 illustrates the increased numbers seen during the passage periods. All of the European Serins observed during the year were in South Coast counties from Scilly to Kent and East Coast counties north to Lincolnshire, with Dorset (24 individuals), Cornwall (16), Sussex (nine) and the Isle of Wight (eight) attracting more than elsewhere.

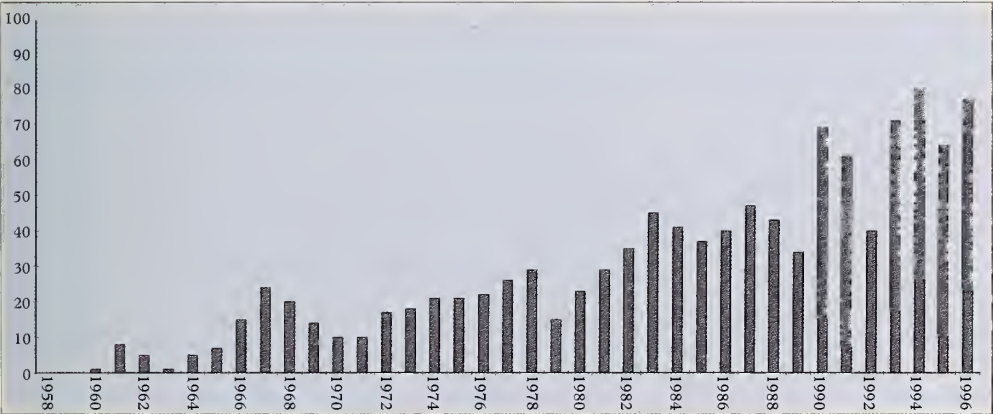


Figure 38. Numbers of European Serins *Serinus serinus* in Britain in each year during 1958–96. Note the much higher numbers from 1990 onwards.

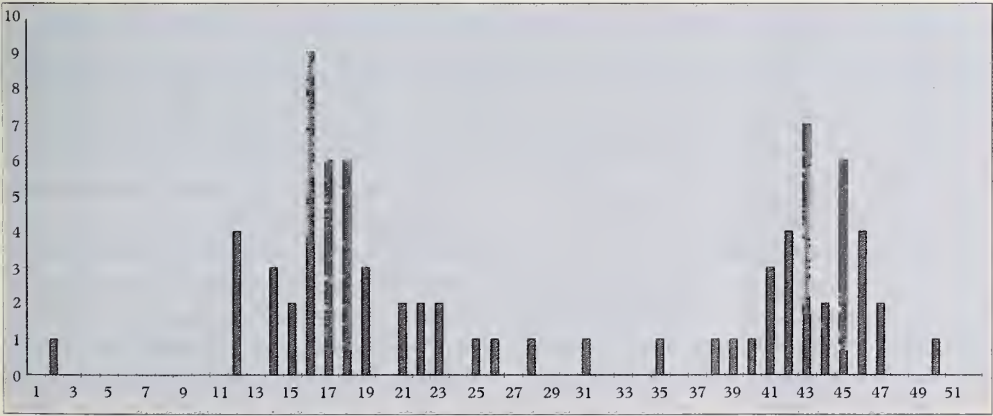


Figure 39. Numbers of European Serins *Serinus serinus* in Britain in each week in 1996. Note the concentrations in spring and autumn.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995				
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1992	1995	1994	1988	1993
144	10	36	77	148	242	179	138	134	134

With the top four annual totals all having been recorded during 1992–96, Common Rosefinches are clearly continuing their long-term increase. In 1996, although the numbers of migrants in spring and autumn were very similar, spring passage was decidedly more concentrated, as illustrated in fig. 40. There were 69 during 19th May to 18th June, five during 26th June to 20th July, and 69 during 12th August to 22nd October,

with a late individual on 7th November on Oronsay, Argyll. Far more Common Rosefinches were seen in the Northern Isles than elsewhere, with 71 in Shetland and 26 in Orkney. Strangely, spring migrants accounted for only 41% of the Shetland total (68% in 1995), yet 81% of the Orkney total. Farther south, the most productive counties were Scilly, with eight individuals, and Caernarfonshire, with seven.

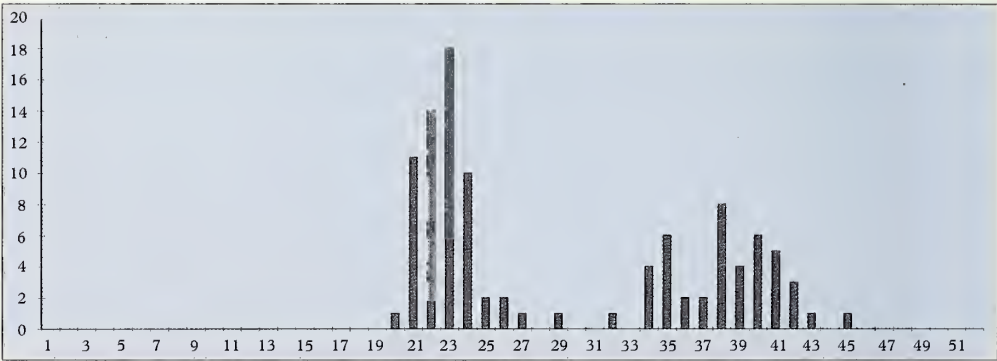


Figure 40. Numbers of Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* in Britain in each week in 1996. Note the similar total numbers of migrants in the concentrated spring migration and the more protracted autumn passage.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1968–1995			Annual maxima 1968–1995			
	68–79	80–89	90–95	1969	1995	1992	1993
106	51	57	65	112	89	85	79

More Ortolan Buntings are visiting Britain each year than at any other time since analysis began in 1968: the 106 in 1996 represented the second-highest annual total during the period and followed good numbers in 1992, 1993 and 1995. In 1996, there were 47 during 22nd April to 2nd June (including 42 during 18th–28th May) and 59 during 23rd August to 13th October (including 53 during 29th August

to 28th September). There were 24 Ortolan Buntings in Shetland, 19 in both Dorset and Scilly, 18 in Orkney and eight in Cornwall, with no more than three in any other county. Seasonal distribution differed markedly between the North and the South: 93% of those in the Northern Isles were seen in spring, while 94% of those in South Coast counties were recorded in autumn.

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

Number in 1996	Annual averages 1958–1995				Annual maxima 1958–1995			
	58–69	70–79	80–89	90–95	1989	1993	1987	1984
27	5	9	24	31	47	45	42	40

From 1984, when Little Bunting numbers increased markedly, to 1995, the annual average was 31, so the total of 27 in 1996 is slightly below par. In 1996, there were singles during 31st March to 21st April in Avon and during 1st–6th May on Fair Isle, Shetland, followed by three individuals during 18th–24th May. In autumn, after

one on 7th September, there were 15 during 18th September to 6th October and six during 20th–24th October. As shown in fig. 41, Shetland was the dominant county, as it was in 1995, with 13 Little Buntings during the year, followed by Scilly, with four, and Norfolk, with three.

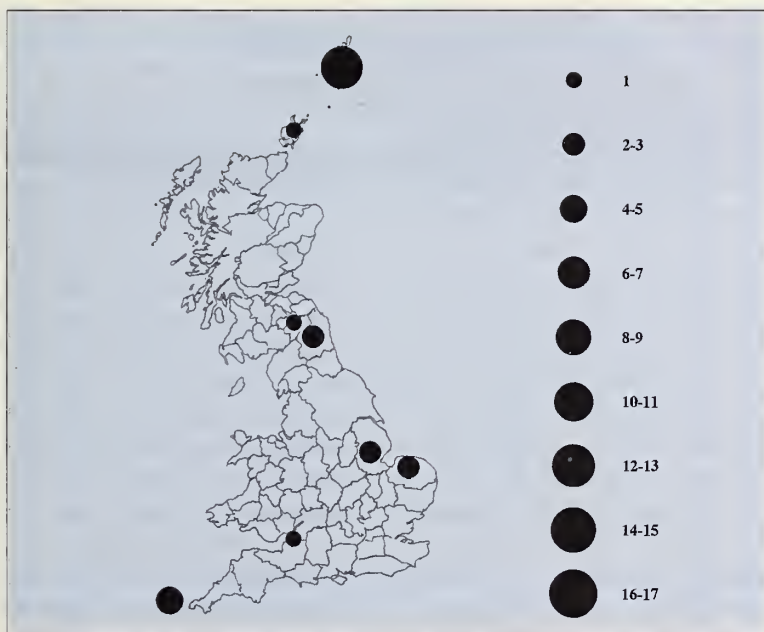


Figure 41. Numbers of Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* in each county in Britain in 1996. Note Shetland's dominance.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three authors are extremely grateful to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, for his encouragement and organisation, and to Dr John Ryan and John Overfield, for their help with data entry. All of us wish to thank most sincerely the county and regional recorders and their assistants, without whom this Report would not have been possible.

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TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SEABIRDS

P. IAN MITCHELL



Northern Gannets and Kittiwakes (*Massimiliano Lippert*)

During the twentieth century, the general attitude towards seabirds in Britain has, in parallel with global priorities, changed from one of exploitation of a valuable resource, to one of preservation of a valuable asset.

The coasts and islands of Britain and Ireland hold some of the World's most important assemblages of breeding seabirds. For instance, at the last count, 94% of the World's population of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus*, 84% of the East Atlantic population of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus* (Murray & Wanless 1997) and 58% of Great Skuas *Catharacta skua*, of which there are only around 14,500 pairs in the World, were found to breed in Britain and Ireland (Lloyd, Tasker & Partridge 1991). All three species breed in large, discrete aggregations. Great Skuas are confined mainly to Orkney and Shetland, while 25% of British & Irish Northern Gannets (some 60,428 pairs) breed on St Kilda (Murray & Wanless 1996), one of only 22 gannetries in Britain & Ireland. Over 90% of British & Irish Manx Shearwaters are confined to just three

islands: Rhum (116,000 pairs: Wormwell 1976) in the Western Isles, and the two adjacent Pembrokeshire islands of Skokholm and Skomer (135,000 pairs: Brooke 1990).

This dense breeding aggregation makes seabird populations extremely vulnerable. The aims of this short paper are briefly to highlight the likely threats to breeding seabird populations and to outline plans for the monitoring of the populations in Britain & Ireland into the next century.

POTENTIAL THREATS

Two major current threats to breeding seabirds are fishery depletion and predation. The depletion of the fish stocks which are their food supply can have an impact on seabird populations directly, as with Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* in Shetland during the population crash of sandeels *Ammodytes* in the late 1980s, when the terns failed to breed and the condition of adults was poor (Suddaby & Ratcliffe 1997). The indirect effects on species such as Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, which are preyed upon by Great Skuas, may,

however, be even more dramatic. In Shetland, measures to conserve whitefish stocks (e.g. increased mesh sizes, reduced fishing effort) have reduced the levels of discarded small fish, the main food source of Great Skuas, which have turned to preying on other seabirds, mainly Kittiwakes, Puffins *Fratercula arctica* and Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* (Furness 1997). This human-induced imbalance between predator and prey is already apparently affecting Kittiwake populations (Heubeck *et al.* in press), and will continue to do so, unless other food sources become more abundant, or until the supply of Kittiwakes, Puffins and other seabird prey no longer supports the artificially high populations of Great Skuas.

Non-cliff-nesting species (i.e. terns, gulls, Puffins, storm-petrels and shearwaters) are particularly vulnerable to mammalian predators (e.g. Stoat *Mustela erminea*, Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, and the non-native Mink *Mustela vison*), but their impact can be lessened either by eradication measures or by exclusion using barrier fencing. On offshore islands, which have no endemic mammalian predators and thus hold the greatest concentrations of ground-nesting seabirds, a major threat comes from introductions of Common Rats *Rattus norvegicus*. The most notable example of the impact of rats is from the Calf of Man in the 1770s, where the original stronghold of Manx Shearwaters was wiped out within 20 years of the introduction of Common Rats (see Brooke 1990). More recently, the catastrophic reduction in Manx Shearwater numbers on Canna, Western Isles, has also been attributed to Common Rats. The distribution of Common Rats and Minks should be monitored closely and, where necessary, these mammals should be eradicated. This has been done recently on the Scottish islands of Ailsa Craig and Handa, where rats have been eliminated in an effort to restore populations of birds such as Puffins and Manx Shearwaters.

Two other major yet, on the whole, unpredictable threats to breeding seabirds

are pollution (e.g. oil, heavy metals, PCBs, plastic particles) and climate change. The impact of climate change on British & Irish populations is likely to be most noticeable with those species (e.g. Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*) whose geographical limits lie somewhere within Britain & Ireland. Furness (1988) found the southern limit of the world distribution of Arctic Skuas to coincide with the 14°C July isotherm. Thus, we would expect the British populations of skuas to retreat farther north, should the climate of northern Britain warm up significantly.

In the light of these ongoing threats to breeding seabird numbers in Britain & Ireland, which are of worldwide importance, it is essential that these populations are regularly monitored.

MONITORING BREEDING SEABIRDS

The first nationwide census of British & Irish seabirds, 'Operation Seafarer', was undertaken by the Seabird Group in 1969-70. This was followed up in 1985-87 by a second census, which resulted in the establishment of the Seabird Colony Register (SCR). The SCR contains records from all known seabird colonies in Britain & Ireland and is maintained by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). The JNCC also co-ordinates the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP), to which regular counts and measures of productivity from selected colonies are contributed by the statutory nature conservation agencies, the RSPB, the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group, the National Parks & Wildlife Service (Ireland), BirdWatch Ireland and many volunteers. These organisations, together with the Seabird Group, are now working in partnership on a forthcoming new national census, 'Seabird 2000'.

SEABIRD 2000

The aim of Seabird 2000 is to obtain, as accurately as possible, estimates of the

populations and distributions of each of the 24 species of seabird which regularly breed in Britain & Ireland. The main census work will take place during 1999–2001 and it is intended that all targeted colonies will be counted once during this period. The census will not be confined to the coast and offshore islands, since Britain & Ireland holds many inland colonies of terns, gulls, skuas and cormorants, some of which are internationally important. Census work will be conducted chiefly by a network of dedicated volunteers, assisted by staff of the organisations listed above.

A complete census of over 4 million pairs of seabirds, breeding in 3,300 colonies, distributed along more than 40,000 km of coastline and at over 700 inland sites, is a massive undertaking. We estimate that over 9,000 person-days, around 1,500 boat-days and ten aircraft-days (for aerial surveys of gannetries) will be required to complete the census. With such an enormous input of resources required, the obvious question is: do we actually need a new comprehensive census, particularly now that regular monitoring and recording of seabird populations in Britain & Ireland is being carried out by the SMP?

WHY DO WE NEED ANOTHER CENSUS?

Variable trends

The changes in numbers of those species regularly monitored by the SMP are rarely homogeneous throughout the range of a particular species. For instance, on average, Kittiwake colonies in Shetland have shown a significant decline (6.9% of breeding pairs per annum during 1986–97), although the annual decline was as much as 14% during the Shetland sandeel crash in 1988–91 (Heubeck *et al.* in press). In Wales, during 1986–97, monitored colonies declined by only 1.8% per annum, while those in Cumbria actually increased (at a rate of 2.9% per annum), and elsewhere in Britain & Ireland numbers remained constant (Thompson *et al.* 1998). Such variation in population trends between different

regions makes it difficult to apply regional rates of change to past national baseline figures in order to determine the current size of the national population. Furthermore, rates of productivity can vary greatly between different colonies, even within the same region and the same year. For instance, in 1997, the fledging rates of Kittiwakes on island colonies in Northwest Scotland varied from 1.38 chicks per pair on Handa to 0.95 on Canna and almost complete breeding failure (0.01 chicks per pair) on St Kilda (Thompson *et al.* 1998).

Weak site fidelity

Some species, notably the terns, show weak site faithfulness from one breeding season to the next. For such species, national or even regional estimates of population sizes obtained from the monitoring of changes in individual colonies might be highly inaccurate. In order to avoid the problems created by movements of birds between colonies, we aim to conduct a simultaneous survey of all tern colonies within a single breeding season, in the year 2000.

Poorly monitored species

A large-scale survey such as Seabird 2000 encourages the provision of resources required to census those species that require labour-intensive survey techniques. Two of the most difficult species are European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. Despite two previous nationwide censuses and an ongoing monitoring programme, information regarding breeding numbers and distributions of both species is incomplete and out of date. Since 1970, European and Leach's Storm-petrels have been confirmed to breed at 83 and eight sites respectively, although the majority have not been surveyed since the 1980s and a further 34 European Storm-petrel sites have not been censused since 'Operation Seafarer' almost 30 years ago. The last census (in 1985–87) estimated 20,000–150,000 pairs of European Storm-petrels in Britain, 70,000–250,000 in Britain

& Ireland; and 10,000-100,000 pairs of Leach's Storm-petrels in Britain (Lloyd *et al.* 1991); the only known Irish colony of Leach's Storm-petrels numbers 200 pairs or more at the Stags of Broadhaven, Co. Mayo (Waring & Davis 1983). The ranges of the estimates of both species are the largest in terms of orders of magnitude of any species of bird breeding in Britain (see Stone *et al.* 1997). Such imprecision results from the fact that storm-petrels do not nest in conspicuous burrows like shearwaters and Puffins, but in rock crevices or under boulders. Consequently, 'estimates' are often merely subjective impressions of the number of birds present during a night-time visit. Even estimates based on the recapture of marked individuals during a season are inaccurate, since they do not always distinguish between breeding and non-breeding birds and may include breeding birds from other colonies (see Furness & Baillie 1981).

Recently, however, a tape-playback technique has been developed (see Ratcliffe *et al.* 1997) which allows more accurate estimates to be made of the number of breeding pairs of storm-petrels in a colony. The technique involves eliciting calls from incubating birds by playing recordings of storm-petrel calls in suitable habitat during the day. Not all birds respond, however, so counts of calling birds must be corrected to arrive at an estimate of breeding numbers. Unfortunately, the probability of response varies not only between sites, but also within sites in terms of year, time of year and habitat. Thus, the technique must be calibrated where and whenever it is performed, rendering it very labour-intensive, but more reliable than other techniques.

The large input of resources from all the co-operating bodies and the use of new census techniques will enable the Seabird 2000 project to improve greatly on our current knowledge not only of these two important and mysterious species, but also of all the other seabirds breeding in Britain & Ireland.

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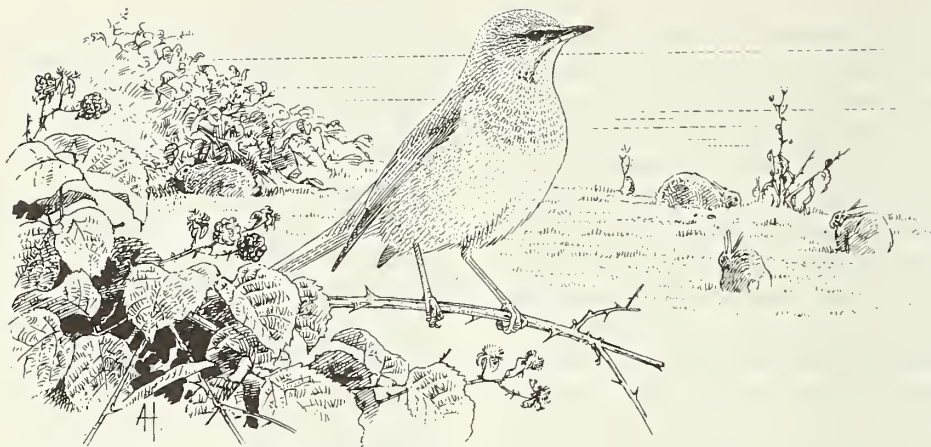
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Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis* (Alan Harris)

RED-THROATED THRUSH IN ESSEX: NEW TO BRITAIN AND IRELAND

BRIAN SMITH, SIMON D. WOOD & SIMON COX

ABSTRACT A first-winter male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of the red-throated nominate race occurred at The Naze, Essex, during 29th September to 7th October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 535). This was the first record of this race in Britain & Ireland, where, up to that time, there had been 30 records of the black-throated race, *atrogularis*.

At 08.50 GMT on 29th September 1994, BS caught sight of an unusual-looking, greyish thrush *Turdus* on steps ascending to the cliff-top cafe at The Naze, Essex. It was about the same size as a Fieldfare *T. pilaris*, with a similarly erect stance, and was uttering a quiet call, 'seep', but its most prominent feature was red outertail feathers, which were startlingly noticeable in flight. He took notes on the bird and then telephoned Steve Beary, who passed the news on to other observers.

The first to arrive, at about 10.20, was SDW, who relocated the bird, facing away from him on the top of a bush. It was disturbed by a dog-walker, but after about five minutes Tim Mendham, Andrew Thompson and Nigel Cuming arrived, and the bird provided fleeting views as it skulked in a cliff-face area of bramble *Rubus* and willowherb *Epilobium*. Alerted by a telephone call from SDW, SC then arrived and, gradually, all six of us obtained reasonable views. Although several of us thought that the bird had

rusty tones on its breast, no-one could be sure, but TM was the first to put forward the suggestion that it might be a 'Red-throated Thrush', the red-throated, nominate race of Dark-throated Thrush *T. ruficollis*. On one occasion, when it flew, AT commented that it resembled a giant Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*. At last, at about 12.30 hours, it finally moved out into the open, perched on top of some gorse *Ulex*, and provided the good views necessary for all six of us to be happy that the provisional identification was confirmed. At this stage, we informed the 'birdlines'. The thrush was seen only twice more on 29th September, but in the next eight days it increasingly frequented more-open areas, including gardens and the hedge bordering a caravan park, where it fed on the berries of bramble, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and hawthorn *Crataegus*, providing good views for well over 2,000 twitchers. This wonderful bird also posed obligingly for many bird-photographers (*Brit. Birds* 88: plates 170-173; 92: plates 3-6), and was sketched by SDW (fig. 1).

The following is a summary of our notes:

GENERAL

A fairly large thrush, perhaps the size of a Blackbird *T. merula* or small Fieldfare, which it resembled in shape and stance. A washed-out grey-brown bird, with obvious rufous gorget and, when in flight, darker rufous-red outertail feathers. From behind and when in flight, looked like a giant Black Redstart.

HEAD

CROWN: Washed-out grey, with hint of brown, extending down back of nape.
SUPERCILIUM: Fairly faint but defined orangey colour starting in front of eye as a thin fine feature but thickening over and behind the eye.

LORES: Dark, either black or very dark grey.
EAR-COVERTS: A tone darker than the crown and perhaps slightly mottled (SDW); fairly dark grey (SC).

MOUSTACHIAL STRIPE: Indistinct, colour much as supercilium.

THROAT: Background colour creamy rufous or buffish. Malar stripe formed by individual black feathers running down throat, splayed at lower end. Submalar stripe formed in same way. In between, fine cinnamon flecks also running down throat.

BODY

BREAST: Extending from base of throat and halfway down breast, a rufous or brick-red, faintly 'scaly' gorget, sharply demarcated from belly, with grey feathers along the demarcation line at the sides; no rufous along the flanks. Remaining area of breast was 'dirty' off-white, with vague grey mottling, but this was not obvious when bird seen head-on.

BELLY AND FLANKS: Off-white, but 'cleaner' white than breast. No other markings.

VENT: Pure clean white.

MANTLE AND RUMP: Colour very similar to nape and crown.

BACK: As mantle.

TAIL

OUTER FEATHERS: Deep rufous-red or orange on at least three pairs of outer feathers, not easily seen whilst bird perched, but very obvious in flight; possibly darker towards tips.

INNER FEATHERS: Colour as mantle.

WINGS

GENERAL: Relatively long and sometimes held slightly drooped. Basic colour washed-out grey/brown. Underside of wing not seen.

PRIMARIES: Darker grey than rest of wings: the darkest wing feathers apart from alula. Tips darker than rest of feather; pale edges less obvious than on inner secondaries and greater coverts.

SECONDARIES: Washed-out grey, but the palest set of wing feathers, forming vague wing panel.

TERTIALS: Between primaries and secondaries in shade, but darker centres offset by pale edges.

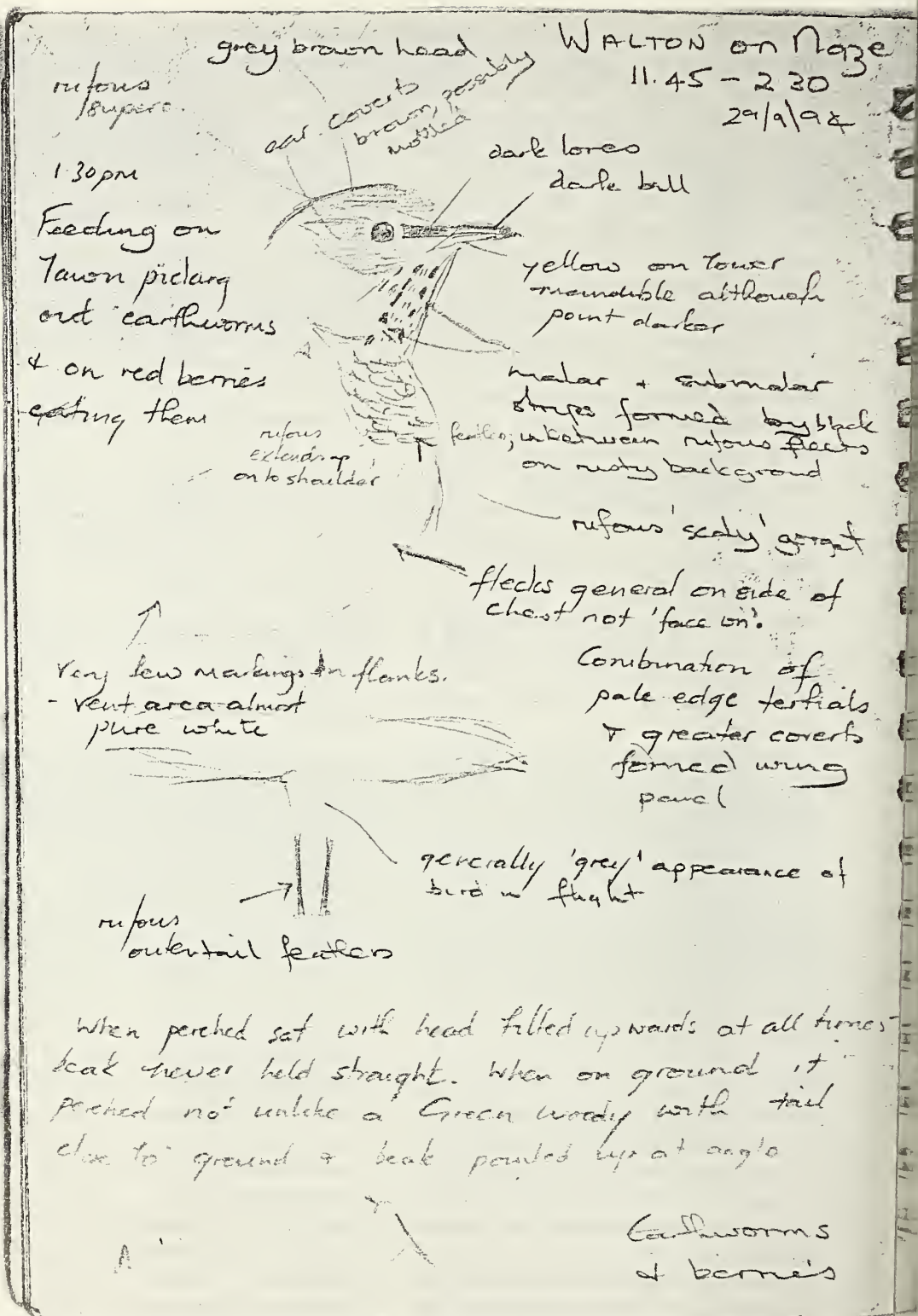
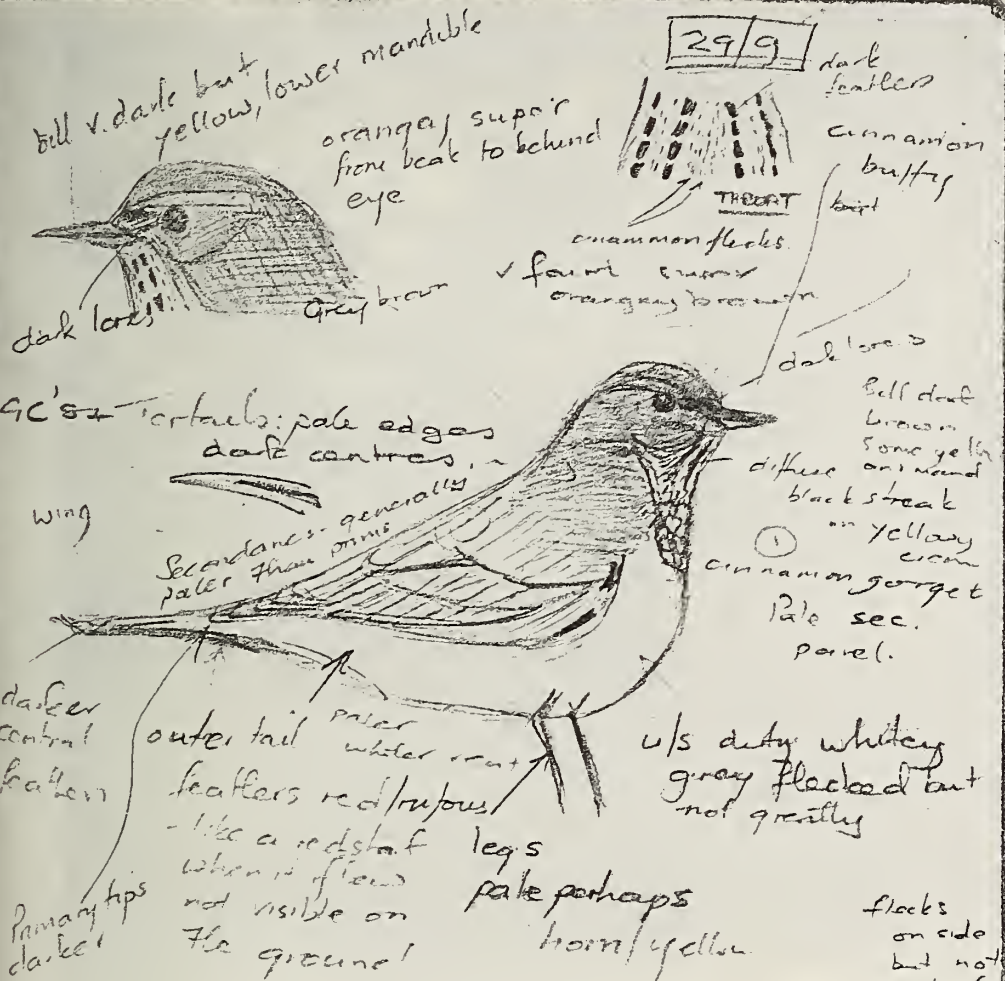


Figure 1. Sketches from field notebook of red-throated, nominate race of Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, Essex, September 1994 (Simon D. Wood)

29/9



like a giant Black Redstart in flight

Call - low zip zip all that was heard

Size - nothing directly comparable, but 'looked' Redstart size, perhaps slightly smaller

In flight a generally pale grey bird

RED-THROATED Thrush ? 1st Winter ♂

B. Smith x

S. Wood x

T. Mendham x

GREATER COVERTS: Colouring as tertials, but perhaps paler tips. Combination of pale edges to tertials and greater coverts formed fairly distinct, pale wing panel when bird seen from rear.

BARE PARTS

BILL: Chunky. Upper mandible dark brown or black. Basal two-thirds of lower mandible yellow, with a dark brown tip.

LEGS: Yellowy/flesh, or brownish.

EYE: Dark.

CALL

Only call heard was quiet 'seep' (BS) or a low 'zip zip' or 'szip szip' (SDW), with the quality of contact call of Redwing *T. iliacus*, but lasting for a fraction of the time.

BEHAVIOUR

At times very skulking, disappearing for some while into low bramble and other vegetation. When perched, it would sit with its head raised slightly above the



3 & 4. First-winter male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of red-throated nominate race (and, below, Blackbird *T. merula*), Essex, October 1994 (above, Robin Chittenden; below, Graham Soden)





5 & 6. First-winter male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of red-throated nominate race, Essex, October 1994 (*Robin Chittenden*)



horizontal so that its bill was always pointing slightly upwards.

Posture when standing on the lawn was reminiscent of a Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* when perched on the ground. It was seen to feed on berries and also took at least three large earthworms whilst within the gardens.

The strength of colouring in the plumage suggests that the bird was a male, and the presence of two or three unmoulted juvenile outer greater coverts confirmed that it was a first-winter.

AUTHORS

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Professor Colin Bradshaw, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'There was no doubt about the identification of this stunning bird, which was accepted on first

circulation with little comment other than on the quality of presentation of the record and of the bird itself. This is not the first claim of this subspecies which the BBRC has considered. It is, however, far and away the best. Previous records have usually involved birds that were seen too poorly to be absolutely sure of the identity. In this case, not only was the bird seen well in a very distinctive plumage, but also a meticulous description was submitted, in addition to many excellent photographs.

‘Whilst this individual proved relatively easy to identify, this would not be the case in all plumages. The differences between females of Red-throated and Black-throated Thrush are much less obvious. The best separating feature is the colour of the outer two or three pairs of tail feathers, which are rufous on Red-throated but concolorous with the central feathers on Black-throated Thrush. In addition, many female Red-throated Thrushes show some rufous streaks on the throat and flanks, whilst the colour is a warm ochre on Black-throated Thrushes. Another complicating factor is the large overlap zone of the two subspecies. This produces a number of birds with mixed features and it is impractical to say whether an individual falls within the range of variation of one of the subspecies or is a hybrid between the two. Thus, the question of just how much red a female Black-throated Thrush can display is unclear (P. Clement *in litt.*).’

Tony Marr, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented: ‘Committee members were more concerned about the correct ageing of this bird (described as “stunning” by one member and as “an absolute cracker” by another) than questioning its identity. The majority view was that it was indeed a first-winter male.

‘There were 30 records of Black-throated Thrush in Britain and Ireland up to that date and some 156 from the rest of Europe. There have been 24 Red-throated Thrushes in Europe, and so this first record for Britain and Ireland is not too surprising.

The question of origin was naturally discussed, but the likelihood of escape from captivity was quickly dismissed in the light of knowledge that very few have been found in captivity and that the circumstances of its occurrence supported a wild bird. There could hardly be a better candidate – an East Coast location; a mid-autumn arrival after a record-breaking cyclone in the southern North Sea which had produced a northeasterly airstream; a first-year bird; and the arrival at about the same time of several Asian vagrants, including the equally famous first-winter male Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* in Norfolk just 11 days earlier.

‘Both black-throated and red-throated forms breed in central Siberia. The more northern black-throated breeds from the Urals east across western and central Siberia to the Lake Baikal area, and in the Caucasus; it winters from the Indian subcontinent, Burma and southwestern China west to Iran, and locally in Arabia. The more southeastern red-throated form breeds in southern Siberia from the Lake Baikal area southwest to the Altai Mountains; it winters from Afghanistan east across northern India and Burma to parts of north and west China.

‘Although the two forms are currently treated as conspecific by most authorities, their taxonomic status is currently under review. As well as separation within the breeding range (apart from some hybridisation in the area of known overlap), there are marked ecological differences between the two forms. Red-throated is a bird of sparse mountain forest and scrub, whereas Black-throated is more a bird of lowland forest and dry woodlands in subalpine steppes. There are apparent differences between their songs and calls, upon which more fieldwork remains to be done in the area of contact.

‘The record was accepted after a very straightforward single circulation, and the red-throated nominate race of Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* was admitted to Category A of the British List.’



REVIEWS

Birds of Somalia

By J. S. Ash & J. E. Miskell.

Colour plates by Martin Woodcock.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1998.

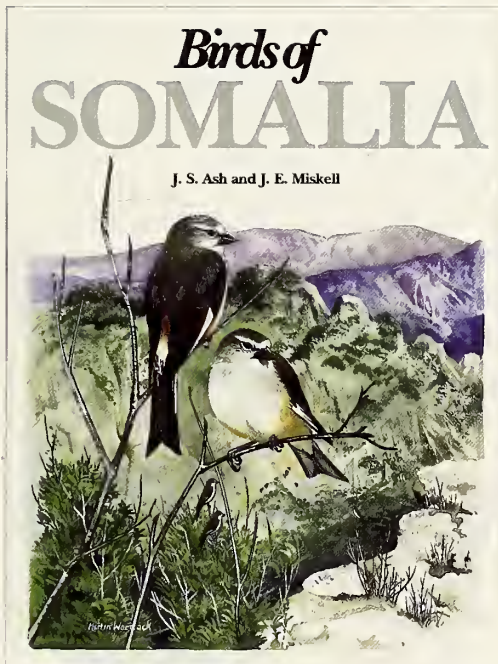
336 pages; 5 colour plates; 24 black-and-white plates; 654 distribution maps.

ISBN 1-873403-58-5. £40.

The ornithology of Somalia has been the least well-known of any African country. This long-awaited book admirably helps to correct this. It is essentially an atlas of the known distribution of all species recorded in Somalia. Of seven introductory chapters, I found that by Christopher Hemmings on the vegetation and soils particularly useful, whilst the final one on bird and wildlife conservation by Peter Robertson makes depressing reading with its catalogue of destruction of wooded habitats and drainage of wetlands, and its conclusion that 'for ornithologists of the future, the prospects are bleak in Somalia.'

There are some 20 rather small black-and-white photographs of a range of habitats, two clear colour maps showing the topography and broad vegetation zones, and five beautiful colour plates by Martin Woodcock, depicting 25 of Somalia's specialities, including seven endemic species, the endemic subspecies and other poorly known species, several of which were first described by the authors.

Distribution maps are given for all 654 species so far recorded in Somalia, and for each there is a concise, clear and readable account, outlining its distribution, status, habitat preferences and behaviour, and summarising breeding data. The maps show distribution by half-degree map squares, of which there are 259 within Somalia. There are data for over 200 of these squares, the authors having personally visited 62% of all squares. In



their first three years in the country, John Ash and John Miskell added some 50 species of birds to the Somalian List.

The book has a somewhat cramped layout, with three maps and accompanying texts, in small print, to each page. Grey shading, showing altitude, does not add to the attractiveness of the maps, and it would have been useful to have had an inset map for each species showing its African range. The content of this book will, however, be warmly welcomed by all birdwatchers and ornithologists with an interest in the Horn of Africa or in the continent as a whole: a huge gap has been filled, and the book should stimulate and help direct further fieldwork, the political situation allowing. We can now look forward to another and equally expert treatise by the senior author on *The Birds of Ethiopia*, which has already had an even longer incubation than did *The Birds of Somalia*.

STEPHANIE J. TYLER

Collins Guide to the Birds of Britain & Europe

By John Gooders.

HarperCollins, London, 1998.

720 pages; over 980 colour photos.

ISBN 0-00-220011-2. £14.99.

Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe

Paul Sterry (consultant editor).

AA Publishing, Basingstoke, 1998.

416 pages; 204 colour plates.

ISBN 0-7495-1767-0. £9.99.



With the publication of two more new field guides, British birders are certainly spoilt for choice. These two, however, are not all they seem. The first is a revised edition of the *Collins Bird Guide* by Gooders & Keith, a photographic guide first published in 1980 (reviewed: *Brit. Birds* 73: 600). The photographs, however, are all new, the maps have been updated and the text rewritten. It is much better than the original, but unfortunately, apart from the cover, it looks much the same in style and layout. The splendid collection of photographs, although beautifully reproduced, would have benefited from a larger format.

The AA guide is a more typical field guide covering 530 species, with text

opposite the plates. Fourteen artists contributed to the book, all but one British, and represent the very best of present-day bird illustrators. What a shame that these wonderful artists have been so badly served by the designers and editors of this unremarkable book. Although most of the illustrations are good, the styles do not always match well and the occasional mixing of different artists on the same plate is a big mistake (the warblers are particularly bad). This has led to some serious scale problems (for example, the Coal Tit *Parus ater* is larger than the Great Tit *P. major*). In addition, the colour reproduction is generally very poor, and many plates are washed-out and not sharp. Although some pages are quite good, this disappointing book is definitely worth avoiding.

NIGEL REDMAN

The Warblers of Britain & Europe

Filmed by Paul Doherty.

Narrated by Bill Oddie.

Bird Images, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1998.

Video. Running time 2 hrs 28 mins. £16.95.



If warblers are your 'thing' (and they are certainly mine), you will not be able to resist this latest offering from Bird Images. After a brief introduction, 56 species are shown (including the recent 'splits' involving Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *P. orientalis*, Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii* and Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis*). When there are clear differences between them, races (including several possible future 'splits') are also included. In addition, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* and Firecrest *R. ignicapillus* are included (but, strangely in view of the inclusion of Canary Islands Chiffchaff, there is no mention of Tenerife Kinglet *R. teneriffae*). Quality of the images varies from superb to adequate, but excellent use is made of freeze-frame and repetition of key sequences to show specific identification points. In a few cases, still photographs are used to augment the film sequences or as a substitute when, presumably, video sequences are not available.

The commentary by Bill Oddie is serious and businesslike, concentrating on identification features rather than every minute detail of the plumage, and covering relevant behaviour, call and song. The identification features covered assume a reasonable level of expertise, and the beginner might find it better to refer to the text of fieldguides for some of the commoner species, for the script comes into its own by bringing in some of the less-well-known pointers, and by making comparisons between similar species. For instance, it draws attention to the downward tail-pumping of Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais (Acrocephalus?) pallida*, the downward tail-wagging movements of Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, and the closed-bill singing of Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* compared with the open-bill singing of Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*. There are useful tips, such as the comment that Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* has everything longer than the Common

Chiffchaff: song, call, primaries and bill (an aide-memoir which will never now be forgotten).

There is good coverage of races, as already mentioned, and of sexual differences when these are major, but not of all age differences (a worn summer adult can look like a totally different species from a fresh-plumaged autumn first-winter, but this is not always emphasised). In many cases, attention is drawn to distinctive phrases, rhythms or timing of songs and calls, but there must surely be more to be said about the song of Rüppell's Warbler than merely 'The song is not particularly impressive.'

If this video is revised, it would be useful to have juvenile Goldcrest included (it is referred to, but not shown, even as a still), and the appearance of juvenile Firecrest is not mentioned. These omissions are, however, mere quibbles. Anyone with an interest in warbler identification should certainly acquire this video, which is full of useful images, comparisons and tips. The value is enhanced by the inclusion of country and month with every sequence. As well as a reference tool, however, this is great entertainment for anyone who likes 'little brown jobs'.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Species History in Scotland: introductions and extinctions since the Ice Age

Edited by Robert A. Lambert.
Scottish Cultural Press, Edinburgh, 1998.
160 pages.
ISBN 1-8401-7011-5. Paperback £14.95.


This book describes the effects of human activities on Scottish wildlife through history, and is derived from contributions to the 1996 Institute for Environmental History annual conference. There is much to interest the birdwatcher, ranging from a depressing account of the extinction of the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* (and how

changes in human attitudes came just too late to save it) to the more positive re-establishments of White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. It is both thought-provoking and intensely relevant at a time when, through global climate change and agricultural intensification, human impacts on wildlife are probably greater than ever.

IAN CARTER

Coloured Key to the Wildfowl of the World

By Peter Scott in association with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. Revised edition. HarperCollins, London, 1998. 96 pages. ISBN 0-00-220110-0. Paperback £7.99.

Revised edition of this familiar guide, with colour paintings by the late Sir Peter Scott, of which the 1988 edition was reviewed by Keith Vinicombe (*Brit. Birds* 82: 86). 

LOOKING BACK

FIFTY YEARS AGO:

'I have been fortunate in being able to arrange for the addition of Mr. J. D. Wood, B.A., M.B.O.U., to the *British Birds* staff. Mr. Wood is an assistant master at Leighton Park School, Reading... and... will take over most of the routine editorial work and much of the correspondence, but I shall continue to be responsible for all the essential duties of an editor-in-chief...'

'Readers may notice that in the present number the use of trinomials in scientific names has been for the most part abandoned. This step, which has been taken after the most careful consideration, may cause surprise to some, but only, I venture to suggest, because the nature of subspecies and the significance of trinomial names have been largely misunderstood by field ornithologists. It is only in a very small proportion of cases that the use of subspecific names in relation to field observations is really scientifically justified or serves a useful purpose.

B. W. TUCKER.'

(*Brit. Birds* 42: 1, January 1949)

ALSO 50 YEARS AGO:

'The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is again appealing for voluntary watchers for service in certain vital areas in




1949. Volunteers are normally expected to travel up to 300 miles at their own expense. During their spell of watching they may be accommodated in either tents or huts. Under normal circumstances the cost to the individual, after payment of rail-fares, works out at less than £1 per week.'

(*Brit. Birds* 42: 31, January 1949)

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO:

'The field identification of small *Calidris* species, commonly called stints in Britain and sandpipers or 'peeps' in North America, presents many problems. Yet separation is possible in many circumstances, and the recent record of British and Irish identifications bears witness to the increasing success of observers who try hard... and since 1967 I had also been pursuing the thought that our lack of knowledge could be masking occurrences of the two east Asiatic species, the Red-necked (or Eastern Little) Stint *C. ruficollis* and the Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*. This paper has therefore been written on a wider brief than was originally intended...'

(From 'Field identification of small species in the genus *Calidris*' by D. I. M. Wallace, with special assistance from P. J. Grant, *Brit. Birds* 67: 1, January 1974) 

LETTERS

BRING BACK THE DALMATIAN PELICAN

Since the re-establishment in Britain of some lost species under pressure elsewhere, and the introduction of lots of aliens, has proved so successful, surely it is time to consider resurrecting the most spectacular of our 'disappeared', the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*? While it is commonly reported that, according to Pliny the Elder in the first century AD, it used to frequent West European estuaries, he actually stated that it occurred in 'the extreme north of Gaul near the ocean' (Rackham 1938), then quite a large area. Its remains have also been found in The Fens and at Sedgemoor in England (Forbes *et al.* 1958) and in Denmark (Hatting 1963), so perhaps it might be worth introducing a few to see what happens?

W. R. P. Bourne

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References

- Forbes, C. L., Joysey, K. A., & West, R. G. 1958. On post-glacial pelicans in Britain. *Geol. Mag.* 95: 153-160.
Hatting, T. 1963. On subfossil finds of Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus* Bruch.) from Denmark. *Vidensk. Medd. Dansk Naturh. Foren. Kobh.* 125: 337-351.
Rackham, H. 1938. *Pliny - Natural History*. London.

BARN SWALLOW GIVING SPECIFIC ALARM CALL FOR HOBBY

I am familiar with the alarm call given by the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* which Peter Atherton described (*Brit. Birds* 90: 526). When living in the village of Everton, Bedfordshire, I could reliably tell from this soft but urgent call ('phoo-it') that a Hobby *Falco subbuteo* was approaching. By contrast, the typical, excited alarm notes of a swallow ('kik-kee, kik-kee, kik-kee...') were stimulated by a hunting Eurasian

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*.

I suggest that the first type of call is a quiet warning of real threat, similar to the soft notes uttered from cover by a Blackbird *Turdus merula* or a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* on spotting an avian predator. The second is perhaps more appropriate for mobbing.

Anthony H. Chapman

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Bedfordshire SG19 3NQ

For over 20 years, I have regularly watched Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* by my house near Swindon, Wiltshire. While I recognise the low-pitched slurred double note referred to by Peter Atherton (*Brit. Birds* 90: 526), I would not describe it as always 'quiet'; nor have I heard it every time before a Hobby appears, although, on the other hand, I cannot recall having heard it when other predators appeared. I have found this call to be uttered prior to a series of high-pitched alarm or 'panic' calls (presumably the 'ziwitt' mentioned in *BWP* vol. 5), which increase in urgency as the Hobby approaches. It is from the intensity of these 'panic' calls given by the swallows, and sometimes by House Martins *Delichon urbica*, that I can distinguish whether the approaching predator is a Hobby. If the calls have a low level of 'urgency', I know that the predator is a Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*, Magpie *Pica pica* or domestic cat (or, occasionally, Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*); a higher level of urgency (not far from the 'panic' call given for Hobby) denotes a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. I would agree with Mr Atherton that, once the danger has passed, the swallows give a brief (and usually fairly quiet) bout of singing.

Stephen B. Edwards

Hazeldene, Medbourne Lane, Liddington,
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I can confirm that our local Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* also utter the low, slurred notes described by Peter Atherton (*Brit. Birds* 90: 526) in the presence of a hunting raptor. Both Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* frequently hunt over Cricklade, Wiltshire, but I have not noticed that only Hobbies elicit the call. I shall certainly watch and listen carefully next summer, but, as the two raptors have, to my eyes, a similar method of attack, I cannot see that any particular advantage could be gained from having a species-specific alarm.

Robin Griffiths

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SPECIFIC PREDATOR RECOGNITION AND REACTIONS OF BARN SWALLOWS

At Anslow, near Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, my farmhouse and the surrounding fields present ideal breeding habitat for Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. In the spring and summer of 1995, regular evening visits by a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* often elicited what I have always taken to be the Barn Swallow's classic reaction to a potential predator: a combination of loud, high-pitched and incisive, disyllabic alarm calls and daring, close aerial mobbing. Effectively, the trail of the hawk was quickly filled with yelling, buzzing birds. In summer, a flock of Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* would often follow the swallows' example and add to the hawk's exposure and rapid exit.

At 18.45 GMT on 19th July 1995, I was sitting in my garden when about ten Barn Swallows came over, rose higher in the air, then scattered widely and constantly gave distinctively soft, plaintive and less sharply disyllabic calls. The cause of their unusual distress proved to be a Hobby *Falco subbuteo*; it gave them no heed, and the swallows, safe again, fell silent and

descended. On five other occasions up to 2nd September, the tactic of wide and high dispersal and ghostly, almost fluted calls drew my eyes to the sky; twice the cause was a visible Hobby, and I have no reason to believe that it was ever another predator. On none of the six occasions were starlings attracted by this second, much quieter and less visible anti-predator strategy. On the last date, within the space of 1½ hours, I watched and heard Barn Swallows display both reactions, leaving me in no doubt that they were able to distinguish between two potential predators and were adopting different tactics for each.

I have always heard the loud, high alarm of the Barn Swallow as 'splee-splink', this call being used also when we or our pets approached too close. The second, softer alarm, however, I found much more difficult to transcribe: 'soo-wee' and 'sooe' are my best efforts.

In the following year, 1996, the swallows acted in a similar way, ascending, scattering and calling plaintively ahead of Hobbies on four evenings and yelling and mobbing sparrowhawks on four occasions. On 25th August, the two different tactics were employed by the same swallows within a period of 45 minutes. I also noted the two calls, used for the same reasons, at the ends of the 1997 and 1998 summers.

BWP (vol. 5), in its account of the Barn Swallow, hints at specific raptor recognition and associated differences in alarm call. My observations appear to confirm that such are presented regularly by at least one local community of this species.

D. I. M. Wallace

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Further contributions will be welcomed for possible publication or summary.





MONTHLY MARATHON

In response to suggestions from several subscribers, we plan in future to provide a brief summary of the identification features visible in each 'Monthly marathon' photograph (*Brit. Birds* 91: plate 156).

These will normally be written by one of SUNBIRD's expert leaders, but in this first such account we have been able to persuade wader-expert John Marchant to provide a commentary on his own photograph:

The blackish mask through the eye of the left-hand bird should immediately suggest one of the two smaller species of phalarope *Phalaropus*. Non-breeding plumages of these two species are very similar, but the slender bill of this bird is very different from that of a Grey Phalarope *P. fulicaria*, which at close range is obviously both deeper and broader. Although its proportions and scaly upperparts may bring juvenile Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* to mind, the right-hand bird also has something of a 'phalarope-mark', and its cheeks and breast are strikingly clean.

These birds are, on the left, a moulting adult Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus*

lobatus and, on the right, a Wilson's Phalarope *P. tricolor* in almost full juvenile plumage. I photographed them on the Californian coast on 17th August 1981.

The juvenile plumage of Wilson's may be unfamiliar to many British-based observers. Post-juvenile moult begins much earlier in phalaropes than in related species and by early September, when most European vagrant Wilson's arrive, typically only the wing-coverts (now hidden by first-winter scapulars) and tertials retain the characteristic brown fringing of juvenile plumage.

JOHN MARCHANT

Competitors named the left-hand bird as Red-necked (92%) and Grey Phalarope (8%), and the right-hand bird as Wilson's Phalarope (46%) and Ruff (46%), with (46%) getting both right. Of the ten leaders, only Peter Lansdown successfully negotiated this hurdle.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



7. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 149. Tenth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species.

Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th February 1999.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BEST ANNUAL BIRD REPORT

To provide public acknowledgment of the high quality of local, county and regional bird reports, and to encourage and promote high standards of content and production of annual publications in Britain and Ireland. Established in 1991. Entries should include one copy of the Report, details of number of members in club or society, name and address from whom copies may be purchased and price (with details of p&p cost). Closing date for entries: 15th December. For full details of the rules, write to Mrs Frances Bucknell, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Past winners: Suffolk (1990), Sheffield (1991), Essex (1992, 1993, 1994), Avon (1994), Norfolk (1994), Essex (1995) and Dorset (1996).

BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

To recognise the best and most scientifically interesting bird photograph. Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during the previous year, may be submitted by each photographer. Preference is given to photographs taken in the Western Palearctic, but those of species on the West Palearctic List taken anywhere in the World are also eligible. The winner will receive a complete 12-volume set of *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Edicions, and an inscribed salver; the two runners-up will receive £40 and £25; all three winners will also receive books presented by HarperCollins Publishers. An additional award of an engraved goblet and £100 is presented by The Eric Hosking Trust for the highest-placed photograph submitted by an entrant aged 25 or under. Sponsor: HBW. Established in 1976. Closing date for entries: 31st January. For full details of the rules, write to Mrs Frances Bucknell,

British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Past winners: Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988 & 1992), Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990), Philip Perry (1991), Alan Williams (1993 & 1994), Mike Lane (1995), Roger Tidman (1996) and Jens Eriksen (1997 & 1998).

Thanks to the Society of Wildlife Artists and the Federation of British Artists, the award presentations will take place at The Mall Galleries.

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR

To recognise an artist for the best set of bird illustrations. Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings (of specific dimensions) suitable for publication. The subjects should be birds recorded in the Western Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). The winner will receive £100 and an inscribed salver, the two runners-up receive £40 and £25, and all three receive books from the sponsors, *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*, at a Press Reception at the Mall Galleries in London. Established in 1979. Two additional awards are presented: The Richard Richardson Award, for the best work submitted by an artist under 22 years of age, established in 1979 in honour of Richard Richardson, the East Anglian ornithologist and artist; and The PJC Award, for a single work of merit, established in 1987 by David Cook in memory of his wife, Pauline. All the winning entries are displayed at the Society of Wildlife Artists annual exhibition and at the British Birdwatching Fair. Closing date for entries: 15th March.

For full details of the rules, write to Mrs Frances Bucknell, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Past winners: *BIY* Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 & 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983), Bruce Pearson (1984), Ian Lewington (1985), Chris Rose (1986), David Quinn (1987), Martin Hallam (1988), John Cox (1989), Gordon Trunkfield (1990), John Davis (1991), John Gale (1992), Richard Allen (1993), Ren Hathway (1994), Andrew Stock (1995), Dan Powell (1996), John M. Walters (1997) and Paul Henery (1998);

RRA Alan F. Johnston (1979), Andrew Stock (1980), Darren Rees (1981), Keith Colcombe (1982 & 1984), Gary Wright (1983), Ian Lewington (1985), Timothy Hinley (1986), Andrew Birch (1987 & 1991), John Cox (1988), Stephen Message (1989), Antony Disley (1990 & 1992), Peter Leonard (1991 & 1993), Max Andrews (1994 & 1995) and Simon Patient (1996, 1997 & 1998);

PJC AWARD J. S. Lyes (1987), John Hollyer (1988), Darren Rees (1989), Andrew Stock (1990), Dafila Scott (1991), Richard Fowling (1992), John M. Walters (1993), James McCallum (1994), George Woodford (1995), Dan Cole (1996), Paul Henery (1997) and George Brown (1998).

YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR

To encourage and recognise the talent and achievements of young birdwatchers destined to become the leading ornithologists of the future. Prizes worth over £2,000 are presented by ten co-sponsors, to winners in three age classes (14 years and under; 15-17 years; 18-21 years). The judges assess entrants' field notebooks. Established by the RSPB in 1930s (run by *British Birds* since 1994). Closing date for entries: 1st September. For full details of the rules, write to Mrs Frances Bucknell, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Past winners: *JUNIOR* Jonathan Dean (1994 & 1995), Matthew Slaymaker

(1997) and Anthony Price (1998);

INTERMEDIATE Simon Patient (1994), Matthew Harding (1995 & 1996), Jonathan Dean & Robert Martin (1997) and Jonathan Dean (1998);

SENIOR Stephen Votier (1994), Jane Reid (1995), Oscar Campbell (1996), Matthew Harding (1997) and Ben Phalan (1998).

FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR COUNTY/REGIONAL RECORDERS

British Birds and Carl Zeiss Ltd, sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee, are jointly continuing to offer free annual subscriptions to *British Birds* to all the County/Regional Recorders, as our way of saying 'Thank you' to them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS MAY BE FOR SALE

Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR 'EUROPEAN NEWS'

We plan to include more photographs of the actual birds mentioned in our comprehensive, six-monthly compilation of verified records from the whole of Europe, and welcome the submission of photographs of the birds concerned for consideration for publication. As with other photographs in *British Birds*, the usual payment rates will be applied.

Photographs (preferably colour prints, but also original transparencies) should be sent to Mrs Frances Bucknell, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY WENDY DICKSON & BOB SCOTT

Pesticide problems and Red Kites

With the increasing emphasis on pesticides (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 91: 163), it is perhaps timely to highlight the role of the UK Wildlife Incident Investigations Scheme (WIIS), run by the UK's Agricultural Departments. The WIIS investigates deaths of wildlife, as well as pets and livestock, in cases where there is evidence to suggest that pesticide poisoning may be involved. Post-mortems are carried out on animals found dead, including analysis to try to establish which pesticides, if any, are involved.

Most incidents involving wildlife deaths fall into one of three categories: approved use, misuse or abuse. Approved use covers deaths where a pesticide has been used legally and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions; whereas misuse involves cases where, normally through carelessness, a pesticide product has been used without adhering to correct practice. These two categories cover only a small proportion of the incidents investigated.

The largest category is abuse, where a pesticide has been used deliberately and illegally in order to poison animals. The report, outlining the results of the WIIS (*Pesticide Poisoning in Animals* 1996), lists a frightening array of incidents involving birds illegally poisoned, including Marsh

Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and more than 50 incidents involving Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*.

The extent of the problem, and the fact that only a tiny proportion of birds killed will ever be reported, is shown by using the Red Kite as an example. Using figures for life expectancy of Red Kites and the proportion of the total number of birds found dead that have been illegally poisoned, English Nature and the RSPB have estimated that over 70 kites from the re-establishment project in England have been killed in this way. Following several cases where the WIIS identified the illegal use of the pesticide *Mevinphos* as the cause of death of kites in Oxfordshire, a local farmer was prosecuted and fined £5,000 for killing a Red Kite. It is hoped that this will have a significant deterrent effect, and already there has been a decrease in the number of reported cases involving Red Kites in England. Anyone finding a dead bird (or other animals) in suspicious circumstances, where poisoning may have occurred, can use the Freephone number 0800-321-600 to report the details.

CONTRIBUTED BY IAN CARTER

BirdLife in the Middle East

After five years' secondment from the RSPB to head the Middle East Division of BirdLife International, Richard Porter will be taking retirement in the spring of 1999. In advance of Richard's departure, a new Middle East office has been opened in Amman, Jordan, and a new head of the BirdLife Middle East Division has been appointed. Adnan Budieri, a Jordanian national, is now in post and undertaking the organisation of the

first-ever bird-conservation workshop to be held in Amman. For further details of the workshop and of BirdLife Middle East, Fax: 00-9626-5347411.

Following his 'retirement', Richard Porter will be maintaining strong links with the Middle East, working with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, preparing a conservation strategy for Socotra Island under the Darwin Initiative.

Clive Hutchinson Memorial Fund

To honour the memory of the late Clive Hutchinson (*Brit. Birds* 91: 269), a Memorial Fund has been launched with the objective of supporting amateur ornithology in Ireland – the type of practical contribution which was such a hallmark of Clive's life and interests. The accumulated fund will be invested and the interest accruing will be used mainly to provide small grants to amateur ornithologists undertaking useful

projects in Ireland. All types of ornithological endeavour will be considered for support, including the costs of publication or a special award for outstanding contributions to Irish ornithology. It is also intended to establish a permanent memorial plaque on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, which was one of Clive's favourite birdwatching places. The Memorial Fund will be administered by BirdWatch Ireland.

Contributions to the Memorial Fund can be made to: Clive D. Hutchinson Memorial Fund, c/o BirdWatch Ireland, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

New Norfolk atlas

Nearly 20 years after the start of the 1980-85 Norfolk Breeding Bird Survey, there are plans for another atlas survey by tetrads, of which there are 1,450 in the county. A pilot study will be carried out by a small

group of observers, and then the full fieldwork will commence in December 1999 and run for a minimum of three years. Questions, comments and offers of help should be addressed to: Moss Taylor, 4 Heath Road, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8JH; Tel: 01263 823637.

New bird species and the World Bank

In late 1997, Marcos Bornschein and Bianca Reinert discovered a new species of tapaculo *Scytalopus* near Curitiba, Brazil. Formally described as the Wet Tall-grass Tapaculo *S. iraiensis* in the July 1998 edition of *Ararajuta*, the journal of the Brazilian Society of Ornithology, the species was under threat of extinction from the moment it was discovered. The new species' habitat is beside the River Irai, site of a dam-construction project funded by the World Bank. Following a worldwide campaign by Brazilian conservationist Dimas Pioli, work was suspended on the site while further detailed surveys of other habitats were carried out. Currently, the Wet Tall-grass Tapaculo has been found in only three areas, of which two are under development and the third would be flooded if the dam construction goes ahead.

Help vultures in Israel

The National Parks and Nature Reserve Authority of Israel is running a nesting surveillance project on the Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* in Gamla Nature Reserve, on the Golan Heights, the site of Israel's largest vulture population. Other raptors breeding in the Reserve include Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus*, Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* and Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*.

Volunteers are required for monitoring during the nesting season and to participate in radio-tracking during December 1998 to September 1999. Accommodation and basic subsistence will be provided for helpers able to stay for at least four weeks.

For more details, contact: Gamla Nature Reserve, POB 70-Katzrin 12-900, Golan Heights, Israel. Tel: 972-6-6963721 (work) or 972-6-6963879 (home); Fax: 972-6-6961166; E-mail: ferro@internet-zahav.net



RECENT REPORTS

COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

The text summarises reports for the period 9th–30th November 1998. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

As well as our regular, up-to-date reports on recent records of rarities and exceptional movements of commoner birds, we plan each month to publish a selection of the best recent photographs of interesting birds. As with all material in this feature, it should be noted that publication of photographs is prior to assessment of the report by the relevant county or regional records committee or, for major rarities, the British Birds Rarities Committee, and these are not yet accepted records.

APPEAL TO PHOTOGRAPHERS

We need photographs (preferably high-quality colour prints) for this feature as soon as possible after the occurrence. The usual fee will be paid, and all submitted photographs of major rarities will be eligible for The Carl Zeiss Award.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Tresco (Scilly), 24th–27th November. **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* Individual of race *borealis* at Portrush (Co. Antrim), 12th–14th November (potential first Irish record). **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* Carnlough (Co. Antrim), 19th–30th November. **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* Roadford Reservoir (Devon), 20th–29th November. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Stronsay (Orkney), 10th November. **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* Stronsay (Orkney), 8th–17th November; two at Portland (Dorset), 22nd–25th November, then one during 26th–29th November. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* near Seaton (Devon), 14th–15th November. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Stiffkey (Norfolk), 17th November; Sennen (Cornwall), 23rd November. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Dungeness (Kent), 23rd and 28th November. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* Andover (Hampshire), about 15th–29th November; Newton (Mid Glamorgan), mid November to 29th November. 



8. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 1998 (Tony G. Collinson)



9. Jack Snipe *Limnocryptes minimus*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Common Snipe of Nearctic race *delicata*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1998 (Tony G. Collinson)



10 & 11. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of Nearctic race *delicata*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1998 (above, George Reszeter; below, Tony G. Collinson)





12. White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides, October 1998 (Anne Marie Henderson)

RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* Merryton Haugh (Clyde), 8th-15th March. **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Dungeness (Kent), 24th April; Godshill (Isle of Wight), 28th April; near Freshwater Bay (Isle of Wight), 30th April; Icklesham (East Sussex), two, 11 May; Pilsey and Thorney Islands (West Sussex), 11th May. **Broad-billed Sanpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Cley (Norfolk), 21st-23rd May. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Holkham (Norfolk), 12th May. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Richmond Bank (Cheshire), 20th February. **Pallid Swift**

Apus pallidus Cliffe (Kent), 25th May. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Ditchford and Stanwick (Northamptonshire), 1st August; Hickling and Breydon (Norfolk), 2nd August. **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Skomer (Dyfed), 21st May. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* (Isle of May), 15th June. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 30th May.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ





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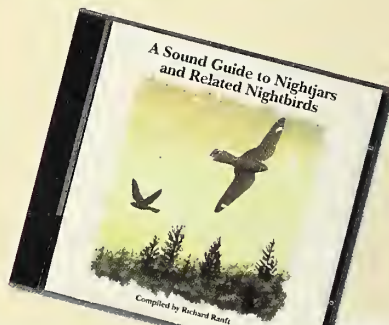
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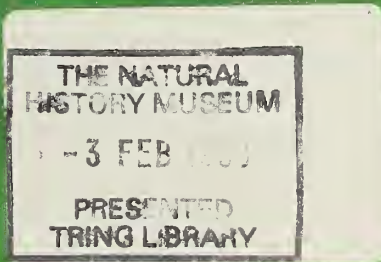
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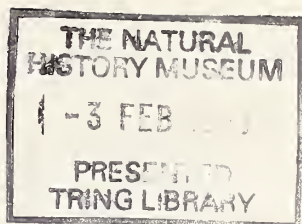
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Front-cover photograph: Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Highland, July 1997 (*Robin Chittenden*)

EDITORIAL: BRITAIN & IRELAND

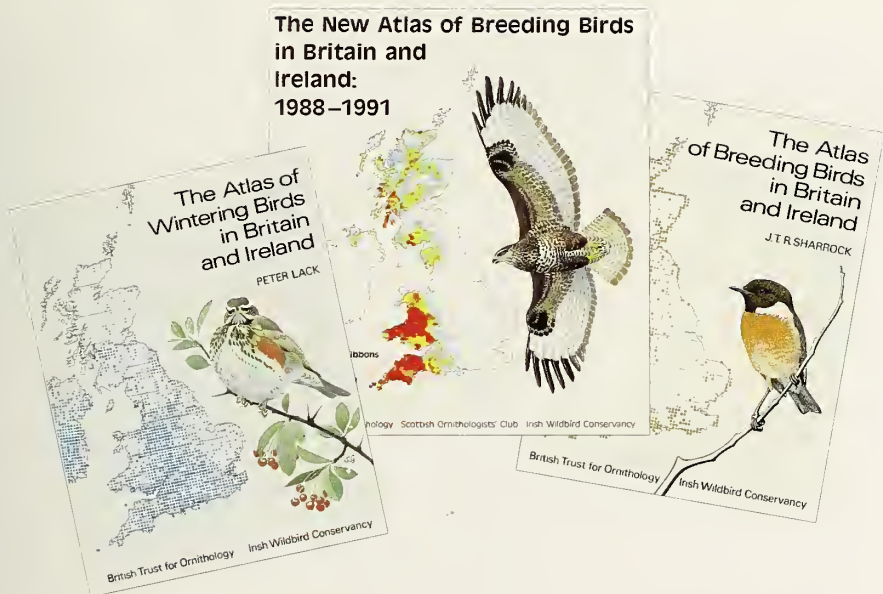
Should Britain and Ireland be regarded as one coherent unit or two, for the purposes of biological recording? Ireland is quite distinct from Britain. It is an island (with many associated smaller islands and islets), so is easily defined. Quite rightly, IWC BirdWatch Ireland maintains an Irish List (*Checklist of the Birds of Ireland*, 1998). Ireland is different from Britain in many ways – no Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* or Green Woodpeckers *Picus viridis*, for instance – but any birder who has visited Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), Great Saltee (Co. Wexford) or anywhere in between will not need to be told that arrivals of migrants are closely linked with those in the Isles of Scilly, on Lundy (Devon) and on Skokholm (Pembrokeshire). At the other end of the island, the Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* which nested in Co. Antrim hunted in Scotland for food for their nestlings (*Brit. Birds* 55: 272-274), demonstrating not only the close links between Ireland and Scotland, but also their close proximity (a mere 25 km apart).

Just a few decades ago, Irish ornithologists were constantly reminding British ornithologists that Irish records should not be forgotten and should always be included in distribution maps or papers on the birds of Britain & Ireland. *British Birds* was always sympathetic to those requests and tried to ensure that Ireland got 'its fair crack of the whip'. Co-operation between Irish and British ornithologists and other biologists led to many invaluable reference works, such as *Atlas of the British Flora* (1962), *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1976), *Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* (1984), *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1986) and *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland, 1988-1991* (1993). These all included records from Britain, Ireland and the Isle of Man

combined, an area that forms a clearly defined zoogeographical unit.

To quote Paul Harding, Head of the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood, 'Britain and Ireland together form a coherent biogeographic unit in comparison with continental Europe, not only biologically, but also in relation to geology, geomorphology, land-use and climate. While it is important to recognise the subtle floristic and faunistic differences between Britain and Ireland, southwestern Ireland is far more like southwestern England than anywhere in continental Europe, except perhaps parts of Brittany and Galicia, and the north and west of Ireland (Co. Donegal, Co. Galway and Co. Mayo in particular) greatly resemble western Scotland.'

There is indeed a long-established and strong tradition of international co-operation between biologists, none more so than between those in the United Kingdom and those in the Republic of Ireland. As a birdwatcher who has served on the Irish Records Panel, (now the Irish Rare Birds Committee), as well as the British Birds Rarities Committee, and who was Recorder of Cape Clear Bird Observatory and is still its President, I hope that I can be forgiven for bluntly stating my opinion that the apparent politicisation of biogeographic studies is a nonsense. It is with regret, therefore, that we have recently had to produce reports on scarce migrants in Britain without the obviously very relevant Irish records (*Brit. Birds* 90: 413-439; 92: 3-34). As recently as January 1998, the British Ornithologists' Union published the latest update of its *Checklist of Birds of Britain and Ireland* (*Ibis* 140: 182-184), but it has now taken the decision to omit Irish records from its list. One suspects that this decision may have been influenced by pressure from some British twitchers, who wish to avoid having to make expensive trips across the



These three pioneering ornithological atlases, published jointly by the British Trust for Ornithology, the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, demonstrate the high level of co-operation between British and Irish ornithologists.

Irish Sea, as well as from some Irish birdwatchers, who see the BOU as irrelevant to Irish ornithology. Indeed, from an Irish viewpoint, an Irish List and analysis of Irish accounts in isolation may make sense; to British biologists, however, distribution patterns in Ireland are an integral part of the general picture for the islands off western Europe, which – with great political incorrectness because of its imperial and colonial connotations – are often called 'the British Isles' (a term studiously avoided in the pages of *BB* for at least the past 30 years).

It should be pointed out that, although some voices have been vehement at times, the Northern Ireland Birdwatchers' Association has, with great diplomacy and pragmatism, provided its information equally to the relevant bodies within the Republic of Ireland and within Britain.

British Birds' current policy is to retain Irish records whenever possible (e.g. in the

species totals quoted in the annual report on rare birds). We may eventually have to bow to the inevitable, for, if Irish records are not made available, we shall be unable to publish maps or summaries for Britain and Ireland combined. We aim, however, to continue to try to do so, rather than take the easy option of including only British records, since the value is so clearly demonstrated by, for instance, the five atlases listed above.

It makes both sets of records much more interesting to see them in the wider context. Animal and plant distributions within these islands of ours, lying off the western edge of the Continent, reveal fascinating patterns. We all – English, Irish, Manx, Welsh and Scots – will gain if we work together, forgetting the artificial political boundaries which mean nothing to the birds which we are studying.

JTRS



EUROPEAN NEWS

This six-monthly compilation, inaugurated 22 years ago (*Brit. Birds* 70: 218), provides the only reliable continent-wide summary of important occurrences, ranging from changes in breeding or wintering distributions to irruptions, nationally rare birds and vagrants.

Records are supplied by a network of national correspondents appointed by each country. A few entries (always marked by an asterisk) are still subject to assessment by the relevant national rarities committee, but all others are accepted, verified records.

As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included. This forty-fourth report includes officially notified records from 28 countries.

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6. Major national rarities, including the first five national records, even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

DENMARK Second-best year since 1977: 202 in 1996, 109 in January-April (exceeded only by 281 in 1979; cf. influx in France in February-March 1996, *Brit. Birds* 91: 38; DOFT 92: 205).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

SWEDEN Largest-ever colony: 107 pairs in Hornborgasjön, Västergötland, in 1997.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophrys*

IRELAND All Irish albatross records have been reviewed and many are now rejected

(see *Irish Birds* 6: 64, 91-92).

MOROCCO Third record: adult off Chafarinas Islands on 13th November 1997* (first was in 1983 and second in 1984, cf. *Brit. Birds* 78: 638).

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL *Pterodroma mollis*

ISRAEL First record: Eilat on 25th March 1997 (no other Western Palearctic records and, apparently, very few in Northern Hemisphere; specimen collected from Dead Sea in November 1968, and recently proposed as *P. mollis*, has been examined and found to be Cape Verde Petrel *P. feae*).



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MALAWI - Lake Malawi, Zomba Plateau &
Liwonde National Park.
12 - 21 Feb '99; 12 - 21 Mar '99.

SOUTHERN MOROCCO - The desert,
Oued Massa, Oued Sous & Marrakech.
12 - 21 Feb '99; 26 Feb - 7 Mar '99; 17 - 26 Sep '99.

ETHIOPIA - Addis, Gafersa, Awash National Park,
Wondo Guenet & Rift Valley Lakes.
20 - 29 Nov '98; 12 - 21 Feb '99;
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ETHIOPIAN ENDEMIC - Debre Libanos, Solulta,
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27 Nov - 6 Dec '98; 19 - 28 Feb '99;
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NEW ENGLAND - USA

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GAMBIA - A variety of localities along the Gambia River.
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TEXAS - USA - Spring migrants along the Gulf coast of Texas.
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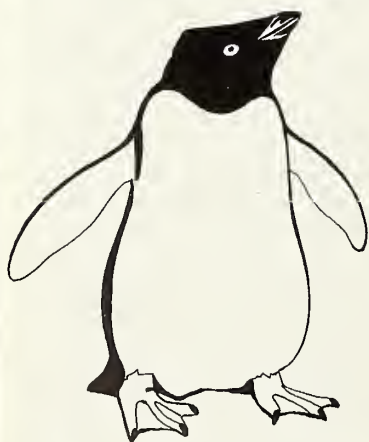
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BULWER'S PETREL *Bulweria bulwerii*

ITALY Second record: 6th February 1994 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 191).

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis*

DENMARK Second record: 18th June 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 256).

GERMANY Third record: 31st August 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 165).

BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster*

ITALY First record: Tuscany on 1st May 1996 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 191).

NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus*

DENMARK Second-best year ever (after 1995): 20,881 in 1996 (*DOFT* 92: 207).

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

SWEDEN Rapid increase halted: 16,000 breeding pairs in 1997, down from 18,000 in 1996.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

FINLAND Fifth record: subadult at Pyharanta, southwestern Finland, on 10th May 1997.

PINK-BACKED PELICAN *Pelecanus rufescens*

FRANCE Probable escapes: immature in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 7th July 1998*, one at Loupiac, Lot, on 15th July 1998* (present since April), and subadult at Étang du Val-Joly, Nord, on 23rd July 1998*. MOROCCO Deletion: first record, of six at Merzouga on 30th April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 27, 264), subsequently not accepted by the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (*Porphyrio* 8: 151-158).

SWEDEN Presumed escape: seen in several provinces (Småland, Västmanland, Östergötland, Dalarna) between 2nd February and 16th April 1998 (later reportedly seen in Norway).

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus*

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding record: pair nesting on Tenerife in May 1997.

SQUACCO HERON *Ardeola ralloides*

SPAIN Range expansion and first breeding record in the Balearic Islands: three or four pairs at Albufera, Mallorca, in 1997 (*Ardeola* 44: 244).

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

HUNGARY Amendment: occurrence on 7th-9th June 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 39) was ninth record (not fifth).

POLAND Second record: 27th April 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 239), stayed to 4th May (*Notatki Orn.* 38: 292).

SPAIN First breeding record in the Balearic Islands: pair at Albufera, Mallorca, in 1997 (*Ardeola* 44: 244).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

BELARUS Fourth record in past 50 years: two near Turov, Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region, on 26th June 1998.

CZECH REPUBLIC Second and third breeding records: four pairs near Ceske Budejovice, southern Bohemia, in 1997, and two pairs there in 1998 (first breeding record was in southern Moravia).

DENMARK High numbers: 12 in 1996, all between 16th May and 15th September (*DOFT* 92: 208).

IRELAND First breeding records: at least 12 pairs breeding within colony of at least 14 pairs of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* in April-June 1997 reared 29 young to fledging (*Irish Birds* 6: 55-56; this entry replaces that given previously, *Brit. Birds* 91: 242). Breeding for second year: in 1998, 17 pairs bred at same site where breeding took place in Co. Cork in 1997 and a further three pairs bred at two other sites in the vicinity.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Egretta alba*

POLAND Second breeding record: pair with nest at Biebrza Marshes during May-June 1998.

SPAIN First breeding record: pair raised young at Ebro Delta in 1997 (*La Garcilla* 102: 26).

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

DENMARK Decline: only one probable

breeding pair in 1996 (four or five pairs in 1995; *DOFT* 92: 208).

SPAIN Highest-ever count in the Strait of Gibraltar: over 1,700 during autumn 1996 (*Quercus* 131: 8-9).

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

SPAIN Correction: winter census (*Brit. Birds* 91: 39-40) carried out during early November 1995 (not 'early 1995').

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

ICELAND Second record: Sandgeroi on 22nd-30th June 1998* (Nearctic origin suspected since invasion of various American species at same time; first record was of five in spring 1824).

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

FRANCE First breeding record outside Brittany: pair in colony of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* in Charente-Maritime in spring 1998.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

DENMARK First breeding since 1969: two pairs bred at two sites in 1996, rearing at least one young (this entry amends *Brit. Birds* 90: 239), and 57-59 passage migrants in 1996 (annual average of five during 1977-95) (*DOFT* 92: 210).

TUNDRA SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

GREECE Largest-ever count: 22 at Evros Delta on 4th February 1997.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens*

HUNGARY Amendment: individual on 5th-14th January 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 81) first seen by shooters in late December 1995, but now regarded as possible escape and placed in Category D (*Túzok* 3: 60-63).

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

SWEDEN Census: about 3,600 breeding pairs in some 15 provinces in 1997 (but some 80% still on Gotland); a few pairs have started to breed inland.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

FINLAND Fourth record of race *nigricans*: Virolahti, southeastern Finland, on 31st May 1997.

NETHERLANDS Increase of race *nigricans*: more than ten in winter of 1997/98, including first-ever family (two adults and two first-winters) on Texel, Noord-Holland, from 15th March 1998 (treated as full species in Netherlands).

SWEDEN Highest-ever numbers of race *hrota*: about 480 in September 1997 (more than the total number of previous records).

RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis*

GERMANY See Switzerland.

SWEDEN Highest-ever number: 25 records in 1997.

SWITZERLAND First record: with Bean *Anser fabalis* and White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons*, flew from southern Germany across Rhine into Switzerland on 19th January 1997 (*Orn. Beob.* 95: 64-65).

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

DENMARK Total of 26-28 in 1996, between 9th February and 29th December (normally about a score annually; *DOFT* 92: 213-214).

COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

HUNGARY Correction: only one proven record, with female and chicks observed, the other two families may have bred outside the boundaries of Hungary since juveniles were already able to fly at time of observations (*Brit. Birds* 90: 239).

SWITZERLAND First breeding record: female and nine young at Klingnauer Stausee on 12th-13th June 1998 (another record in 1998 is still under consideration).

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

CANARY ISLANDS First record (vagrant/escape): female dead on Tenerife in December 1995 (*Ardeola* 45: 100).

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata*

HUNGARY Deletion: species has never bred in Hungary (record, *Brit. Birds* 91: 40, related to Common Shelduck).

IRELAND Breeding status: self-sustaining population of 20-30 pairs in Co. Down established since 1978 (*Irish Nat. J.* 25: 280-285).

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: female wintering on Fuerteventura from October 1997 to January 1998*.

MOROCCO Fifth and sixth records: 30th December 1995 and 22nd December 1996 (latter previously noted as fifth, *Brit. Birds* 91: 40; *Porphyrio* 9: 168).

FALCATED DUCK *Anas falcata*

GERMANY Presumed escape: 18th-23rd February 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 221).

NETHERLANDS Vagrant/escape: adult male on 10th-28th May 1996, considered to be same as that on 21st-22nd May 1994 and 3rd May to 12th June 1995 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 146).

COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: first-winter male on Fuerteventura in February and March 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 101) and male there from

November 1997 to January 1998*.

HUNGARY First record of race *carolinensis*: adult male in Hortobágy on 17th April 1998 (*Túzok* 3: 53-56).

NORWAY Vagrant of race *carolinensis*: 22nd July 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 10).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors*

MOROCCO Vagrant: female on 22nd December 1996 (*Porphyrio* 9: 168).

MARBLED DUCK *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

MOROCCO Census: in 25 wetlands surveyed in October 1997, a total of 1,877 was counted, including 1,420 at Sidi Moussa Oualidia on 23rd, 266 at Sidi Bou-Rhaba on 16th, 63 at the Loukkos estuary on 21st and 66 at Barrage Mansour Ed-Dahbi, Ouarzazate, on 27th (*TWSG News* 11: 25-27).

SOUTHERN POCHARD *Netta erythrophthalma*

ISRAEL First record for Western Palearctic: Eilat from 22nd April to beginning of May 1998 (plate 13).



13. Female Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* (with male Garganey *Anas querquedula*), Israel, April 1998 (*Hadoram Shirihai*)

CANVASBACK *Aythya valisineria*

GREAT BRITAIN First record: 18th January to 10th March 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 522).

REDHEAD *Aythya americana*

GREAT BRITAIN Second record: male on 4th-24th February 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 467).

ICELAND First and second records: male at Rif á Snæfellsnesi on 7th-10th July 1998* and different male at Miones from 11th July to at least 18th July 1998*.

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

FINLAND Second to fourth records: adult males at Piikkio, southwestern Finland, on 9th May 1997, at Vuolijoki, central Finland, from 3rd June to 16th August 1997, and at Lemi from 14th May to 2nd July 1998.

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

CANARY ISLANDS First records: on Tenerife, female from November 1991 to March 1992, female from November 1994 to March 1995, and a pair, female from November 1995 and male since January 1996, to March 1996 (these details update those given previously, *Brit. Birds* 88: 267; 89: 250; *Ardeola* 45: 101 & 103).

ICELAND First record: adult male at Sandgeroi on 16th-17th May 1998*.

NETHERLANDS Second record: adult male on 13th January 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 146).

KING EIDER *Somateria spectabilis*

DENMARK Record numbers: 19 in 1996, of which 16 during January-May (including one remaining from 1995), one in June, two in October and one in December (*DOFT* 92: 214-215).

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

ICELAND Second record of Nearctic race *deglandi*: two adult males at Pvottárskiour on 4th June 1998*.

HOODED MERGANSER *Lophodytes cucullatus*

ICELAND Second record: adult male and female at Míohús í Garoi on 23rd-24th May 1998*.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

MOROCCO See White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*.

WHITE-HEADED DUCK *Oxyura leucocephala*

MOROCCO Fifth record: male at Merja Bargha on 30th May and 28th June 1997* (*Oxyura* 9: 147-148). First record of hybrid with Ruddy Duck *O. jamaicensis*: adult female on 28th March 1996, 'probably originating from Spain' (*Porphyrio* 9: 168).

SPAIN Highest-ever census total: 1,087 in September 1997 (*Quercus* 142: 11).

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE *Elanoides forficatus*

CANARY ISLANDS First West Palearctic record: 1993 record (*Brit. Birds* 91: 243, plates 85 & 86) now accepted by the Comité de Rarezas de SEO and documented in *Ardeola* (45: 103) and *Limicola* (12: 80-84).

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*

FRANCE Influx in spring 1998: adult at Roussennac, Aveyron, on 13th April*, pair there in July*, one at Saint-Cyr-en-Retz, Loire-Atlantique, from 13th May to at least end of July*, and one at Douillet, Aisne (Picardy, not far from Britain), on 23rd May*.

NETHERLANDS Second record: De Cocksdorp, Texel, Noord-Holland, on 29th-31st March 1998 (identification of individual in 1992 listed as provisional second record, *Brit. Birds* 86: 280, has been accepted, but origin considered doubtful).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

ICELAND First record: Hörgslandskot á Siou from mid December 1997 to late May 1998* (ringed and wing-tagged as juvenile in Scotland in July 1997).

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

DENMARK First breeding for many years: three pairs in 1996, two of which each reared one young, after high overwintering total of

40-50 in winter 1995/96 (DOFT 92: 217-218).
FINLAND Continuing steady increase: 116 young reared in 1997.

LAMMERGEIER *Gypaetus barbatus*

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: at least one but probably two single immatures during 12th-19th May 1998 (all from re-establishment sites in French Alps, as in 1997: *Brit. Birds* 91: 43).

GRIFFON VULTURE *Gyps fulvus*

FRANCE Records outside breeding areas: 12 together at various locations in Saône-et-Loire département on 1st-2nd June 1998*, and four at Saint-Etienne-de-Saint-Geoirs, Isère, on 4th June 1998*.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*

FINLAND Best-ever year: 30 accepted records (previous best: 13 records in 1993 and 18 in 1996).

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

ICELAND Second record: dead at Reynivellir í Suoursveit on 22nd March 1998*.

LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo rufinus*

FINLAND Second record: Outokumpu, eastern Finland, on 11th May 1997 and, same individual, at Kotka and Hamina, southern Finland, on 31st May 1997.

LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila pomarina*

MOROCCO First record: Tafilalt, Merzouga, on 18th April 1996 (*Porphyrio* 9: 169).

TAWNY EAGLE *Aquila rapax*

ISRAEL Third record: Urim, northwest Negev, on 21st December 1997.

STEPPE EAGLE *Aquila nipalensis*

HUNGARY Amendments: record on 6th April 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 83) now accepted as Greater Spotted Eagle *A. clanga*; two on 26th June 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 83) stayed until 6th July 1996 (*Túzok* 3: 44).

NORWAY Vagrant: Finnmark on 28th July

1994 (five previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 12).

EASTERN IMPERIAL EAGLE *Aquila heliaca*

CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding record: pair bred successfully in south Moravia in 1998.
FINLAND Fifth record: Kuusamo on 14th June 1997.

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos*

FINLAND Increasing slowly: 103 young reared in 1997.

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*

FRANCE Influx: 114 in spring 1998.

COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

SWEDEN Influx: 540 singing males in 1997 was highest recent total.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

SWEDEN High numbers: 265 singing males in 1997.

SORA CRAKE *Porzana carolina*

IRELAND Second record: adult at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 2nd-4th August 1998* (first was in 1920).

LITTLE CRAKE *Porzana parva*

SWITZERLAND Influx: eight records involving ten individuals in March-May and August-September 1996 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 95).

STRIPED CRAKE *Porzana marginalis*

ITALY First record: adult female at Livorno harbour on 4th January 1997 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 190-191; *Dutch Birding* 20: 172-174).

CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

IRELAND Status: early indications for 1998 show stabilisation of population at about 150 pairs, with decrease in Co. Donegal population, but increase in Shannon Callows population.

SWEDEN High numbers: 350 singing males on mainland in 1997; preliminary reports indicate that 1998 was a good year too.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

DENMARK Record spring and autumn passages: in 1996, at least 7,626 in spring, of which 6,790 passed over Zealand, where 2,313 on 6th April and 2,511 on 7th April, the highest one-day spring counts ever; and 'very conservative estimate' of 7,578 in autumn, including national one-day record count of 4,468 over Bornholm on 20th October (these figures replace those given in *Brit. Birds* 90: 84, 241; *DOFT* 92: 222).

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

POLAND Third breeding record: three pairs with nests at Slonsk Reserve, Warta River mouth, in June 1998.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER *Charadrius semipalmatus*

GREAT BRITAIN Second record: mid April to 21st September 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 472).

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

SWEDEN Decreasing: only two pairs breeding successfully in 1997 (cf. five to 12 pairs in 1975-81, eight or nine pairs in 1989, five pairs in 1994: *Brit. Birds* 75: 25; 84: 230; 89: 254).

LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*

FRANCE First record: adult in breeding plumage at L'Aiguillon-sur-Mer, Vendée, on 21st-22nd July 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 245; *Ornithos* 4: 150; 5: 39, 42-45).

GREAT BRITAIN First record: 14th-16th August 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 522).

ISRAEL Second record: Eilat on 14th-16th April 1998.

GREATER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius leschenaultii*

HUNGARY Amendment: individual involved in second record (noted *Brit. Birds* 91: 44, 245) moved to Szeged, Fehér-tó, during 1st-12th June 1997.

CASPIAN PLOVER *Charadrius asiaticus*
CYPRUS Vagrant: 16th-19th April 1998.

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica*

NORWAY First record: Svalbard on 27th May 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 12).

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis fulva*

FRANCE Second record: adult in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 16th-18th August 1998*.

NORWAY Vagrant: 8th-9th July 1992 (eight previously published records; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 12).

MASKED LAPWING *Vanellus miles*

FRANCE Escape: adult at Mouzay, Meuse, from 29th February to 8th March 1998*.

SOCIABLE LAPWING *Vanellus gregarius*

CZECH REPUBLIC Vagrant: 19th-23rd October 1996 (five previous records; *Zpravy CSO* 45: 19).
NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 3rd-14th April 1996 and 12th June to 26th July 1996 (29 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 150).

SPAIN First record for Balearic Islands: Albufera, Mallorca, on 3rd November 1996 (*La Garcilla* 102: 27).

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING *Vanellus leucurus*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: November 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 45; *Ardeola* 45: 105-106).

DENMARK First record: Tissø on 13th-14th July 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 45) now accepted (*DOFT* 92: 260).

ITALY Third record: 13th-14th October 1996 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 191).

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Assendelft, Noord-Holland, from 21st February to 8th March 1998 (plate 14).

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER *Calidris pusilla*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 45; *Ardeola* 45: 106).

RED-NECKED STINT *Calidris ruficollis*

FINLAND Second record: Virolahti, south-



14. White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, Netherlands, 23rd February 1998 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

eastern Finland, on 2nd June 1997 (record on 12th July 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 246, now becomes third).

IRELAND First record: adult at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 2nd-5th July 1998*.

NETHERLANDS Second and third records: 25th July 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 150) and Oud-Beijerland, Zuid-Holland, on 4th July 1998*.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

DENMARK Massive autumn passage, possibly largest in twentieth century: in 1996, total of 42,832 reported during 6th July to 29th October, peaking in second half of September, with five flocks exceeding 500 individuals, including national record of 1,350 at Lønnerup Fjord, N-Jutland, on 22nd September (DOFT 92: 224).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: juvenile on La Palma in October 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 106).

FINLAND Fifth record: Pori, western Finland, on 23rd June 1998.

NETHERLANDS Third to fifth records: 13th

August 1996, 18th August 1996 and 7th September 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 150).

POLAND First record: adult at Nowa Pasleka, Vistula Lagoon, on 28th-29th May 1998.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrants: Tenerife in July 1989 and in July 1990 (*Ardeola* 45: 106).

HUNGARY Corrections: second record on 8th (not 5th) September 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 242); only five records, involving seven individuals, prior to September 1994 record (*Brit. Birds* 91: 46).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 1st September 1996 and 28th September to 2nd October 1996 (73 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 150).

NORWAY Vagrants: 16th May 1982, 5th May 1983, 3rd-4th August 1985, 19th July 1986, 3rd-4th June 1993, 25th September 1994, 21st-22nd August 1995, 16th September 1995 (49 previously published records involving 55 individuals; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 12).

POLAND Vagrant: 4th-7th August 1996 (16 previous records, involving 18 individuals; *Notatki Orn.* 38: 298).

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

ITALY First wintering record: Bocca d'Ombro, Toscana, on 7th December 1996 (*Avocetta* 21: 223).

PINTAIL SNIPE *Gallinago stenura*

ITALY First record: decomposing body, Sicily, 27th December 1996 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 191).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER*Limnodromus scolopaceus*

MOROCCO Date extension: fifth record (*Brit. Birds* 91: 46) was from 30th March to 26th April 1997*.

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 12th June 1996 and 11th-13th August 1996 (11 previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 152).

LONG-BILLED/SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER*Limnodromus scolopaceus/griseus*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: adult from January to April 1986 (*Ardeola* 45: 106-107; previously published as Long-billed Dowitcher, *Brit. Birds* 91: 46).

MOROCCO Fifth record: 21st November 1996, probably Long-billed *L. scolopaceus* (*Porphyrio* 9: 169).

SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW *Numenius**temuirostris*

GREECE Vagrants: two at the Axios Delta on 30th March 1997, and two immatures at the Kalamas Delta on 10th-18th April 1997.

ITALY Influx: 18-19 at Frattarola Marsh, Puglia, from 21st January to 28th March 1995 (*Avocetta* 21: 223).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes*

MOROCCO Fifth record: adult at Souss Estuary on 16th and 18th June 1996* (fourth was at same place in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 256).

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

SPAIN First breeding record: pair raised young at Lertutxe dam, Vizcaya, in spring 1996 (*Ardeola* 44: 254).

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*

ITALY First wintering record: Simeto, Sicily,

from 17th December 1994 to 11th March 1995 (*Avocetta* 21: 224).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER *Actitis macularia*

SWEDEN First and second records: 27th-28th August 1987 (previously rejected, but now accepted) and 2nd May 1995.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

BELARUS Second record: two on Pripyat river, near Turov, Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region, from 26th May to 4th June 1998 (first was in June 1987, *Brit. Birds* 84: 230).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Phalaropus tricolor*

GREECE Second record: adult female at Lefkimmi, Corfu, on 8th April 1997.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

BELARUS Third record and first since 1931: Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region, on 6th August 1998.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*

BULGARIA Largest-ever count: at least 44 near Cape Galata on Black Sea coast, from 27th July to 2nd August 1993.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

DENMARK Record numbers and first breeding: 55-56 in 1996 (previous best 38 in 1995 and 33 in 1994), including 15 oversummering; one breeding attempt, but unsuccessful (*DOFT* 92: 228-229).

IRELAND First successful breeding record: pair feeding fledged juvenile at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 6th July 1996 (*Irish Birds* 6: 77).

LAUGHING GULL *Larus atricilla*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: from January to February 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 244; *Ardeola* 45: 107).

MOROCCO Vagrant: adult on 6th May 1996 (five previous records; *Porphyrio* 9: 169).

NETHERLANDS First record: Groningen from

22nd August to 20th October 1997 (not to 18th October as noted *Brit. Birds* 91: 247; *Dutch Birding* 20: 107-110).

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*

DENMARK Third-best year ever: 59 during August-November 1996, exceeded only by 187 in 1987 and 76 in 1995 (cf. exceptional numbers in Sweden and fourth Finnish record in same period, *Brit. Birds* 90: 244; 91: 47; *DOFT* 92: 229).

BONAPARTE'S GULL *Larus philadelphia*

NORWAY Second record: 17th December 1995 into 1996 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 14).

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus genei*

HUNGARY Third and fourth records: 11th May 1998* and 30th May to 4th June 1998* (previous records were in May 1992 and June 1996, *Brit. Birds* 90: 244).

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*

MOROCCO Vagrant: second-summer at Oued Souss estuary on 17th April 1998* (23 previous records).

NORWAY Vagrants: four in 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 14).

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL *Larus*

glaucescens

CANARY ISLANDS First record: El Hierro in February 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 318; *Ardeola* 45: 108-109).

MOROCCO First record: adult at Essaouira on 31st January 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 35; *Porphyrio* 9: 170).

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus*

cachinnans

CZECH REPUBLIC First to third breeding records: one nest near Lednice, southern Moravia, in 1996, and three nests there and one near Trebon, southern Bohemia, in 1998.

FRANCE Status of nominate race: 12-14 records by the end of 1997, following first (found dead) in May 1960 and second in Pas-de-Calais on 1st February 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 135-139, 145-148).

NETHERLANDS Increase of nominate race: 75 in February 1998, including 40 at roost near Oost-Maarland, Eijsden, Limburg, on 15th (see plate 15).

SWITZERLAND First record of nominate race: Romanshorn on 21st-22nd and 26th December 1997.



15. Adult male Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of nominate race, Huizen NH, Netherlands, 21st January 1998 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

IRELAND Third record of race *thayeri*: adult at Killybegs, Co. Donegal, from 22nd February to 15th March 1998* (first and second records also*).

ROSS'S GULL *Rhodostethia rosea*

ITALY Second record: subadult at Pericarole Villa Literno, Campania, on 2nd May 1997, ringed on 6th May 1997 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 91).

CASPIAN TERN *Sterna caspia*

DENMARK High numbers: 91-93 at 29 localities in 1996, although some possible overlap between sites (*DOFT* 92: 231).

LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: Lanzarote in January 1987 (*Ardeola* 45: 114).

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

HUNGARY Corrections: record on 16th-17th May 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 257) is sixth, not fourth; record on 23rd October 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 48) is fifth, not third.

ELEGANT TERN *Sterna elegans*

SPAIN First record: Barcelona on 24th-30th April 1993 (*La Garcilla* 99: 26-27; *Dutch Birding* 20: 1-5).

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

HUNGARY Deletion: record on 16th September 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 257) is now rejected.

SOOTY TERN *Sterna fuscata*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: between Tenerife and La Gomera in September 1988 (*Ardeola* 45: 110).

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding record: pair at Karvina, Silesia, in July 1995 (*Cas. Slez. Muz. Opava* 45: 87-88; *Zpravy CSO* 45: 20).

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybridus*

ITALY Decrease: 158-183 breeding pairs censused in 1996 (cf. 305-365 in 1982).

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

SWEDEN Influx: normally extremely rare inland, but large numbers inland in several provinces in western Sweden in September 1997; on Lake Stora Le in Dalsland, a few stayed the whole winter, which is unprecedented.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

DENMARK Recolonisation: three pairs bred on Bornholm in 1996, after absence of 96 years (*DOFT* 92: 232).

ORIENTAL TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia orientalis*

FRANCE Third record: adult near Niort, Deux-Sevres, on 18th May 1998*.

LAUGHING DOVE *Streptopelia senegalensis*

SPAIN Second record (escape/vagrant): Málaga on 16th May 1997 (*La Garcilla* 102: 28).

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

BULGARIA Second record: two adults on Black Sea coast at Sozopol on 11th May 1998.

MONK PARAKEET *Myiopsitta monachus*

FRANCE Breeding: pair reared three young at Parentis-en-Born, Landes, in May-August 1997 (*Alauda* 66: 66-67).

COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

ITALY First winter record: 9th December 1994 (*Avocetta* 21: 224).

MALTA Second breeding record: Gozo, fledged mid July 1998.

ORIENTAL CUCKOO *Cuculus saturatus*

FINLAND First and second records: Lieksa, northern Karelia, from about 15th June to 11th July 1998 and Karstula, central Finland, from 25th June to 4th July 1998 (*Alula* 4: 114-116).

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo*

NETHERLANDS Second well-documented

breeding: pair successfully reared four young at Maastricht, Limburg, during March-June 1998.

MARSH OWL *Asio capensis*

MOROCCO Census: breeding population at Merja Zerga totalled at least 15 pairs in spring 1998.

WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL

Hirundapus caudacutus

NETHERLANDS First record: Middelburg and Veere, Zeeland, on 22nd May 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 153, 168-172).

SWEDEN Second record: Örebackar, Hornborgasjön, Västergötland, on 5th June 1998*.

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

IRELAND Third record: Dundalk, Co. Louth, on 24th April 1998.

NORWAY Fourth record: 3rd June 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 15).

COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

SWEDEN Close to extinction: only three confirmed breeding pairs in 1997, following recent hard winters.

BELTED KINGFISHER *Ceryle alcyon*

ICELAND Second and third records: female at Geroar í Garoi on 17th-18th May 1998 and female at Árbær á Mýrum on 18th-22nd June 1998.

BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER *Merops superciliosus*

DENMARK Third record: Husby, W-Jutland, on 6th July 1998*.

FINLAND Third record: Foglo, Åland Islands, on 30th May 1998.

GERMANY Second record: 30th May 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 201).

NETHERLANDS Second record: West-Terschelling, Friesland, on 18th May 1998.

SPAIN Second record: Zaragoza on 25th April 1997 (*La Garcilla* 102: 28).

SWEDEN Vagrant: Malung, Dalarna, on 8th-11th June 1998*.

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

ESTONIA Third, fourth and sixth records: Ränna, Tartu district, on 16th May 1982, three near Kihelkonna, Saaremaa Island, on 2nd June 1993 and 12 at Puhtu, Lääne district, on 3rd July 1997 (record on 16th May 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 13, becomes fourth).

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

DENMARK Record numbers: 43 in 1996, of which 24 in second half of April (previous best was 41 in 1995, *Brit. Birds* 91: 49; *DOFT* 92: 235).

BLACK WOODPECKER *Dryocopus martius*

FRANCE Increasing: westerly range expansion continuing, with breeding or sightings in all but ten départements (*Alauda* 66: 131-134).

MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER

Dendrocopos medius

ESTONIA Second record: Tuudi, Lääne district, on 14th June 1998* (first was in October 1990, *Brit. Birds* 84: 232).

WHITE-BACKED WOODPECKER

Dendrocopos leucotos

SWITZERLAND First record: male at Schanfigg on 15th, 18th and 26th April 1996 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 97).

CALANDRA LARK *Melanocorypha calandra*

GERMANY Second record: 16th May 1996 (first was in June 1933; *Limicola* 12: 202).

BLACK LARK *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*

CZECH REPUBLIC First record: Zakupy on 28th November 1981 (*Sylvia* 32: 61-62; *Zpravy CSO* 45: 20).

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella brachydactyla*

SWITZERLAND Influx: 12 records involving 16 individuals in April-June 1996 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 97).

WOOD LARK *Lullula arborea*

GREAT BRITAIN Population increase and range expansion: about 1,500 (1,426-1,552) territories located in 1997, representing northward range expansion and substantial increase from the 241 territories found in 1986 (*BTO News* 216/7: 25).

PLAIN MARTIN *Riparia paludicola*

FRANCE First record: 25th October 1997 (not 25th September 1997 as given in *Brit. Birds* 91: 249; *Ornithos* 5: 148-149).

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

CYPRUS Vagrants: 14th March 1997, two on 4th May 1997, two on 8th May 1997 and one on 12th October 1997 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 44: 47).

DENMARK Vagrants: 20 in autumn 1996 (*DOFT* 92: 237).

GERMANY Vagrants: 28 in 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 203).

MOROCCO Wintering: 27th December 1995, 3rd-5th January 1996, with flock of 15 on 4th January, and 27th December 1996*; also 20th April 1997*.

NORWAY Vagrants: about 37 in 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 42).

SWITZERLAND Fifth record and first in spring: 15th April 1997 (*Orn. Beob.* 95: 61-63).

BLYTH'S PIPIT *Anthus godlewskii*

FINLAND Vagrant: Helsinki on 4th-12th October 1997 (ten previous records).

GERMANY First record: Heligoland from 25th September to 2nd October 1996 (*Limicola* 11: 117-119; 12: 203, 205).

NORWAY First record: Nord-Trøndelag on 3rd-13th November 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 15).

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni*

CYPRUS Second record: three during 19th-29th April 1998.

GERMANY Vagrants: three in October-November 1996 (15 previous records; *Limicola* 12: 203).

POLAND Vagrant: 1st December 1996 (nine previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 38: 304).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

ESTONIA Fourth record of black-headed race *feldegg*: Saastna, Lääne district, on 5th May 1998*.

ITALY First wintering record: four individuals of blue-headed, nominate race at Lentini, Sicily, in winter 1994/95 (*Avocetta* 21: 225).

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

HUNGARY Correction: male at Csajto was on 16th-18th April 1995 (not 15th-17th April as given *Brit. Birds* 89: 38).

LATVIA Increase: at least six pairs breeding in 1998, at three sites, including regular breeding site since 1993 at Jelgava.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

IRELAND Invasion: flocks in 18 counties in January-March 1996 (*Irish Birds* 6: 83-84; *Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 76-79; cf. irruption into France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden in 1995/96, *Brit. Birds* 89: 260; 90: 89).

NORWAY Irruption: 'large numbers' in autumn and winter 1995/96 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 50).

BLACK-THROATED ACCENTOR *Prunella atrogularis*

FRANCE First record: first-winter at Chézy-sur-Marne, Aisne, from 7th December 1997 to 18th March 1998*.

RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL *Tarsiger cyanurus*

FINLAND Best-ever year: 40 singing males and one confirmed breeding record in 1997 (this species has not been considered by the Finnish Rarities Committee since the end of 1996).

GERMANY Vagrant: 8th September 1996 (five previous records; *Limicola* 12: 206).

NORWAY Fifth record: 8th October 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 18).

BLUE-FRONTED REDSTART *Phoenicurus frontalis*

SWEDEN First record (but perhaps escape):

male at Ottenby, Öland, on 3rd-5th June 1998*.

COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

DENMARK Amendment: vagrant of eastern race *maura* on 19th October 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 246), possibly also present on 18th (DOFT 92: 239).

FINLAND Apparent hybridisation between female *maura* and male Whinchat *S. rubetra* in Siilinjärvi, central Finland, in 1997 produced four young.

PIED STONECHAT *Saxicola caprata*

CYPRUS Second record: 23rd November 1997 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957) Ann. Rep.* 44: 53).

PIED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe pleschanka*

DENMARK Fourth record: 15th May 1997 (DOFT 92: 263).

NETHERLANDS Fifth record: 17th November 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 154).

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*

DENMARK Second and fourth records: 23rd-26th November 1995 and 16th-29th March 1997 (DOFT 92: 263; August 1996 record, DOFT 91: 144, *Brit. Birds* 91: 250, becomes third).

NETHERLANDS Fifth record: 2nd-4th June 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 155).

DESERT WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti*

GERMANY Vagrant: 25th November 1996 (seven previous records; *Limicola* 12: 206).

HUNGARY Amendment: first record was on 17th-20th November 1991 (not only 17th as given *Brit. Birds* 90: 246).

NETHERLANDS Fifth and sixth records: 30th October to 12th November 1996 and 14th-24th December 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 155).

ROCK THRUSH *Monticola saxatilis*

NETHERLANDS Third record: male at Hoge Veluwe, Ede, Gelderland, on 17th May 1998 (plate 16).

WHITE'S THRUSH *Zoothera dauma*

GERMANY Vagrant: 24th February 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 206).

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

SWEDEN First record of race *alpestris*: ringed at Utklippan, Blekinge, on 2nd-4th June 1998*.

GREY-BACKED THRUSH *Turdus hortulorum*

GERMANY Presumed escape: 10th-12th October 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 223).



16. Male Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Netherlands, 17th May 1998 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

DUSKY THRUSH *Turdus naumanni*

GERMANY Vagrant of race *eunomus*: 29th-31st December 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 206).

DARK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus ruficollis*

DENMARK Vagrant: black-throated race *atroregularis* on 10th October 1993 (five previous records; *DOFT* 92: 263).

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: adult male of race *atroregularis* at West-Terschelling, on 12th-14th April 1998.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

DENMARK First confirmed record of Icelandic race *coburni*: 24th October 1995 (*DOFT* 92: 263).

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

HUNGARY Deletion: 23rd August 1996 record (*Brit. Birds* 90: 246) not accepted.

SWEDEN Second record: Ottenby, Öland, on 24th-27th April 1998*.

PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*

GERMANY Fourth record: 24th August 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 207).

HUNGARY Third record: Fenékpuszta on 1st

April 1995 (record in July 1995, *Brit. Birds* 90: 246, becomes fourth; *Túzok* 3: 50).

NORWAY Third record: 17th September 1994 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 18).

SLOVENIA First to fifth records: 29th August 1992, 9th October 1996, 13th August 1997, 17th September 1997 and 21st October 1997 (*Acrocephalus* 19: 49-52).

SPAIN Second record: Andalucia on 6th November 1996 (*La Garcilla* 100: 27).

BASRA REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus griseldis*

ISRAEL Vagrant: Eilat in March and first half of April 1998 (plate 17).

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 31st August and 1st September 1996, and 9th-11th September 1996 (six previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 158).

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

POLAND Second record: 2nd May 1996 (*Notatki Orn.* 38: 305).

SARDINIAN WARBLER *Sylvia melanocephala*

DENMARK Third and fourth records: 4th



17. Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*, Israel, 27th March 1998 (*Arie Outverkerk*)

May 1997 and 22nd May 1997 (DOFT 92: 263).

GERMANY Fifth record: 1st June 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 209).

HUNGARY Second record: adult male netted at Tömörd on 5th April 1998.

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 12th November to 29th December 1995 (six previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 158).

DESERT WARBLER *Sylvia nana*

DENMARK Third record: Saltholm, Zealand, on 10th May 1998*.

FRANCE First record: Camargue on 16th May 1971 (*Orn. Mitt.* 24: 271-272; *Ornithos* 5: 39).

ORPHEAN WARBLER *Sylvia hortensis*

SWEDEN First record: Olseröd, Skåne, on 16th May 1998*.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

DENMARK Record wintering numbers: 147 reported in winter 1995/96, thought partly as a result of increased observer awareness and greater participation in garden bird counts, but also to genuine increase following series of mild winters (cf. average of 52 per winter during 1992/93-1994/95 when 15-20 previously considered normal, *Brit. Birds* 90: 90; DOFT 92: 241).

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

DENMARK Invasion: at least 84 in autumn 1996, all during 11th October to 12th November, including 'absolute minimum' of 54 on Christiansø, Bornholm, where 17 on 19th October was highest national one-day total ever (see *Brit. Birds* 90: 247; DOFT 92: 241).

GERMANY Vagrants: 23 in 1996, on 17th May and in October-November (*Limicola* 12: 210).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 19 in 1996 (previous highest total was 13 in 1989; *Dutch Birding* 20: 158, 161).

NORWAY Vagrants: 16th October 1988, at least six during 7th-14th October 1989, and 7th November 1995 (42 previously

published records involving 55 individuals; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 19).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 66 in 1997 (second-highest total ever, following 280 in 1996, *Brit. Birds* 91: 251).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

CANARY ISLANDS Winter records: Fuerteventura in February 1987, March 1991 and February 1993, and Tenerife in March 1987 (*Ardeola* 45: 111).

GERMANY Vagrants: 42 in September-October 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 210-211).

IRELAND Vagrants: 11 in September-November 1996 (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).

POLAND Vagrant: 20th September 1996 (46 previous records; *Notatki Orn.* 38: 306).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 24 in 1997 (normal numbers).

HUME'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus humei*

FRANCE First to fifth records: Ouessant, Finistère, on 22nd-24th November 1988, Ouessant on 2nd-6th December 1988, Ouessant on 29th March to 6th April 1989, Hoédic, Morbihan, on 24th-30th October 1995 and in Bouches-du-Rhône on 17th January to 23rd February 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 39).

GERMANY Fourth and fifth records: 23rd October to 5th November 1996 and 10th-12th November 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 211).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 18th October 1981 and 17th December 1995 to 3rd January 1996 (11 previously accepted records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 161).

RADDE'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

GERMANY Vagrants: 9th October 1996 and 22nd October 1996 (five previous records; *Limicola* 12: 211).

NETHERLANDS Vagrants: 11th October 1996, 11th October 1996 and 12th October 1996 (six previous records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 161).

DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

DENMARK Vagrant: 18th October 1997

(28 previous records; *DOFT* 92: 263).

GERMANY Vagrants: four in October 1996 (four previous records; *Limicola* 12: 211).

NETHERLANDS Vagrant: 21st-22nd October 1994 (18 previously accepted records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 161).

WESTERN/EASTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER
Phylloscopus bonelliorientalis

HUNGARY Deletion: report of 18th October 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 248) not accepted.

EASTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER
Phylloscopus orientalis

FINLAND First record: Pyhtää, southeastern Finland, from 2nd June to 1st July 1997.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

NETHERLANDS Vagrants of race *tristis*: 26th October 1985 and 2nd November 1995 (four previously accepted records; *Dutch Birding* 20: 161).

NORWAY First record of race *tristis*: Akershus on 7th November 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 19).

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

DENMARK Record numbers: 105-111 individuals in 1996, 83-89 during March-July, including several breeding pairs, and 22 during September-December (previous best year 1994, with total of 85-87, *Brit. Birds* 90: 90; *DOFT* 92: 242).

COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*

MOROCCO Fifth and sixth records: singles at Merzouga on 25th April 1997* and at Tizi-n-Tichka on 1st May 1997*.

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

BELARUS Range expansion: one clutch in 1997 and two in 1998 at Selets, Brest region, and 10-15 pairs at Beloye, Gomel region, in 1998.

MARSH TIT *Parus palustris*

GREAT BRITAIN Population decrease: breeding numbers in 1997 were lowest in

35-year history of the BTO's Common Birds Census (*BTO News* 216/7: 13).

WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*

GREAT BRITAIN Population decrease: breeding numbers in 1997 were lowest in 35-year history of the BTO's Common Birds Census (*BTO News* 216/7: 13).

EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

POLAND First record of race *asiatica*: 23rd October 1995 (cf. irruptions in Finland, Latvia and Sweden in autumn 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 262; *Notatki Orn.* 38: 306).

ISABELLINE SHRIKE *Lanius isabellinus*

CYPRUS Vagrant: 6th-7th April 1998.

GERMANY Vagrant: 22nd November 1996 (six previous records; *Limicola* 12: 212).

ITALY Fifth record: 28th February to 20th March 1997 (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 67: 191).

NORWAY Vagrant: 29th May 1995 (six previous records; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 20).

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE *Lanius schach*

HUNGARY Deletion: photographs of bird caught on 21st April 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 242; 90: 248; *Túzok* 1: 31, 34) show that it was not this species, but probably a hybrid between Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* and Woodchat Shrike *L. senator*.

SOUTHERN GREY SHRIKE *Lanius meridionalis*

DENMARK Third record of race *pallidirostris*: 19th-26th November 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 264).

NUTCRACKER *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

NORWAY Irruption of slender-billed race *macrorhynchos*: large numbers in autumn 1995 from August, reaching a peak in mid September, when there were probably over 1,000 in Trondheim alone, and declining to only a few by the end of December (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 46, 50).

DAURIAN JACKDAW *Corvus dauuricus*

DENMARK First record: Blåvandshuk on 12th April 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 264).

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

SWITZERLAND First breeding of 'hooded' race *cornix* north of Alps: following increase to south of Alps in the last 20 years, pair with two fledged young above Peist, in Valley of Scharffs, Grisons, on 10th July 1993 (*Orn. Beob.* 95: 68-70).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

CANARY ISLANDS First presence and breeding record: minimum of 20 pairs nesting in the port of Gran Canaria in March 1988.

RED-EYED VIREO *Vireo olivaceus*

NETHERLANDS Fifth record: 3rd-8th October 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 163).

EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus*

DENMARK Highest-ever numbers: 131 in 1996, of which 121 in spring, plus several breeding records, and third winter record, of one from 30th November 1995 to 19th March 1996 (*DOFT* 92: 245).

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

ICELAND Second and third records: male at Reynivellir í Suoursveit from 25th April to 12th May 1998 and male at Höfn í Hornafiroi on 5th-14th May 1998 (first was in March 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 252).

COMMON REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

NORWAY Irruption of nominate race: 'large numbers' in autumn 1995 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 89: 264; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 50).

ARCTIC REDPOLL *Carduelis hornemanni*

NORWAY Irruption: 'large numbers', with over 300 in October-December 1995 (also in Denmark and Britain; *Brit. Birds* 89: 264; 91: 55; *Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 46, 48, 50).

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL *Loxia leucoptera*

DENMARK Correction: the invasion noted previously (*Brit. Birds* 91: 252) related to 1997, not to 1996.

HUNGARY Amendment: adult male which arrived on 30th October 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91:

252) stayed until 22nd November 1997 (*Túzok* 3: 11-14).

NETHERLANDS Invasion: at least 150 individuals from August 1997 to 5th May 1998, with flocks in Friesland, Flevoland, Noord-Holland, Utrecht and Gelderland (these details replace those given in *Brit. Birds* 91: 252).

SWITZERLAND Deletion: species deleted from Swiss List (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 102).

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

BULGARIA Invasion: some at unusual places (e.g. five on Black Sea coast near Kamchia Reserve on 12th May 1998).

TRUMPETER FINCH *Bucanetes githagineus*

CYPRUS Vagrant: adult male on 17th April 1998.

DENMARK Second record: 2nd June 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 264).

PINE GROSBEAK *Pinicola enucleator*

GERMANY Presumed escape: 9th March 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 223).

NORWAY Irruption: 'probably several thousand' in invasion from end of October to December 1995 (*Vår Fuglefauna Suppl.* 2: 48-50).

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

ICELAND Fourth record: Skógar udir Eyjafjöllum on 14th May 1998*.

NORTHERN PARULA *Parula americana*

GERMANY First record: Horb, Baden-Württemberg, on 25th October 1985 (*Limicola* 12: 77-79).

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

NETHERLANDS First record: Spaarndam, Noord-Holland, from mid-December 1981 to mid-February 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 591; *Dutch Birding* 20: 163-164).

PINE BUNTING *Emberiza leucocephalos*

DENMARK Second record: 18th-19th October 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 264).

GERMANY Vagrants: 25th February to 28th March 1996 and 19th-20th April 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 215).

MOROCCO Deletion: report of 1st January 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 279) not accepted by Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (*Porphyrio* 8: 151-158).

MEADOW BUNTING *Emberiza cioides*

GERMANY Presumed escape: 1st June 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 223).

YELLOW-THROATED BUNTING *Emberiza elegans*

SWEDEN Presumed escape: male at Solleron, Dalarna, from 28th May to 20th June 1998*.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

IRELAND First record for Northern Ireland: Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim, on 19th October 1997.

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

IRELAND First record for Northern Ireland: St John's Point, Co. Down, on 27th April 1997.

CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra*

SWEDEN Almost extinct: only one pair breeding in 1997 (cf. 14 singing males in 1988, six or seven in 1992 and 1993, five in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 83: 230; 88: 280; 89: 266).

INDIGO BUNTING *Passerina cyanea*

ISRAEL First record (vagrant/escape): Mount Hermon in second week of June 1998*.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENTS

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LOOKING BACK



ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO:

'We had here, in the winter of 1845, immense numbers of the gray phalarope (*Phalaropus platyrhynchus*). Every winter we have a few, but on this occasion they came in such flocks as had never been before noticed. They appeared to have had a long flight and to be quite worn out, so much so that many were caught with the hand, others knocked down with sticks, and shot in large numbers as they sat till very closely approached. There were several killed on the quay at Exeter; and it appeared, from the many notices in the local papers, that these birds occurred in large quantities on the whole of the southern part of this county. The time of their visit was in October; and an old and intelligent wild-fowl shooter, well acquainted with the birds that visit our coast, informed me that whenever the equinoctial gales blew strongly from the south-east these birds always appeared in

considerable numbers, and in an exhausted condition; and this year they certainly appeared after very strong south-east winds.' (*Zoologist* 7: 2384, February 1849)

FIFTY YEARS AGO:

'*The Handbook* does not mention the common habit of the House-Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – at least in London – of pursuing pigeons ... So far as I have seen, the pigeon is always attacked in flight, the sparrow apparently endeavouring to fly beneath the pigeon's wing close to its body and presumably to peck at it, although owing to the speed at which both birds move it is not possible to be sure on this latter point. The pigeon shows every sign of fear, flying at great speed, twisting and swerving; in short behaving much as it does when attacked by a falcon ... Derek Goodwin.'

(*Brit. Birds* 42: 64, February 1949)



RECENT RECORDS OF NEARCTIC LANDBIRDS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

NORMAN ELKINS



Black-and-white Warbler (Stephanie Thorpe)

ABSTRACT: Records of Nearctic vagrant landbirds in Britain and Ireland during the decade 1987-96 are summarised and discussed, and also compared with those in previous decades. Their association with autumnal atmospheric conditions across the North Atlantic is described, and year-to-year fluctuations considered. There was a steady decrease in the number of annual records in the early years of the decade, reaching a minimum in the years 1992-94. These fluctuations were thought to have been brought about by a combination of meteorological patterns and population changes.

Records of passerines and near-passerines of North American origin in Britain and Ireland continue to excite birders, not least because of the birds' long-distance flights across the Atlantic Ocean. In two previous papers (Elkins 1979, 1988), I described the relationship between vagrancy and fast-moving weather systems that developed over their normal southward migration

routes during the period 1957-86. In this paper, I analyse the published records for the decade 1987-96.

METHODS

Records used in this analysis were obtained from the published annual reports of the British Birds Rarities Committee (Rogers *et al.* 1988-98), which include those from Ireland and the

Channel Islands as well as those from Britain. Supporting data from other European countries, including Iceland, were noted from the regular 'European news' reports in *British Birds*. Irish records for 1996 were extracted from the *Irish Bird Report* 1996.

The first date of each record was identified, and the records separated according to season as follows: March to June (spring), August to November (autumn) and December to February (winter). There are currently no records for which the date of first sighting was in July.

Daily (in some cases six-hourly) synoptic charts prior to each record were scrutinised carefully. Several events allowed back-tracking of trajectories, as described in Elkins (1979). Monthly mean-sea-level pressure charts and climatic data were also studied.

RESULTS

While the previous 30 years had seen a steady but fluctuating rise in the number of individual birds recorded, probably partially owing to increased awareness and improved identification skills of observers, the decade 1987-96 saw that trend reverse (fig. 1). Autumn records rose by 108% between the decades 1967-

76 and 1977-86, but the decade under review showed only a further 10% rise. Records peaked in the mid 1980s, when numbers were similar to those in the late 1970s. The autumn of 1992 was the poorest since 1977, although there was a recovery in 1995, which produced the second-highest autumn total ever (see fig. 1). In the decade under review, fewer records (15 in total) occurred in spring (table 2, page 91), but winter records (12) increased, possibly owing to over-wintering birds being located.

Of those autumn species numerous enough for trends to be detected, only Swainson's Thrush* and Red-eyed Vireo became more abundant, with the latter species being the commonest Nearctic passerine visiting the region. A total of 73 Red-eyed Vireos occurred in 1987-96, all in autumn (38% of all autumn Nearctic vagrant landbird records), compared with four in 1967-76 and 30 in 1977-86. Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Grey-cheeked Thrush and Rose-breasted Grosbeak all showed a sharp decline after increases in earlier decades, while no Scarlet Tanagers or American Redstarts were recorded. Only one American Robin appeared (in winter), although this species exhibited

*Scientific names of all species are given in Appendix 1.

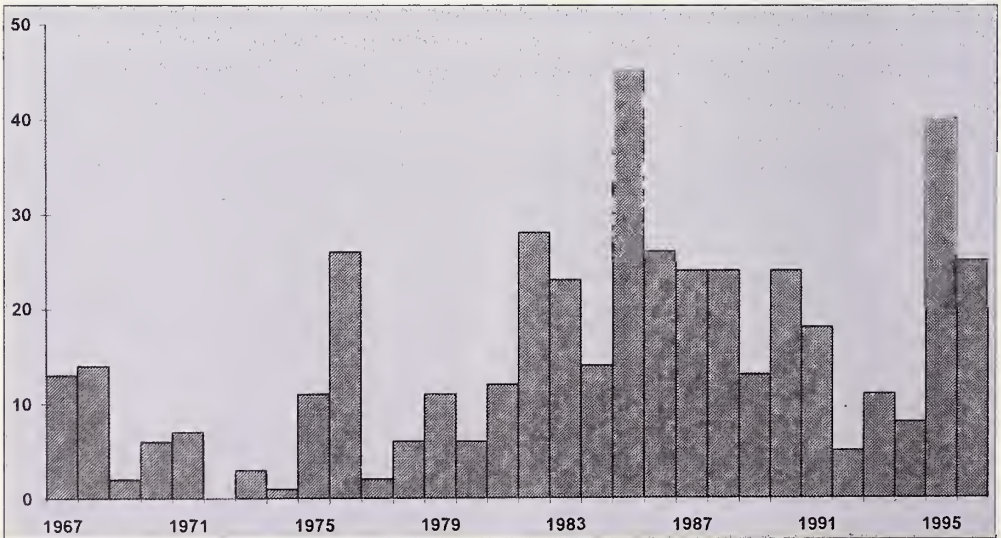


Figure 1. Autumn (August-November) totals of Nearctic landbirds in Britain and Ireland, 1967-96.

considerable fluctuation during previous decades. Most of the wood-warblers showed little change (e.g. Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped and Blackpoll Warblers), although the four Yellow Warblers were the first since 1964. Four species were recorded for the first time.

Mean arrival dates in 1987-96 were similar to those in the previous two decades, except for the two commoner thrushes (Grey-cheeked and Swainson's), which appeared a week earlier in the period under review. Yellow-rumped Warblers were generally a week later, but the sample was small and dates very scattered.

The most notable periods of vagrancy in the decade were mid October in 1987, 1991 and 1995, and from late September to mid October in 1988, 1990 and 1996. I shall now deal with the meteorological aspects of each of these.

October 1987

The first arrivals in this period were on 7th, when a Wood Thrush was recorded in Scilly and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Co. Cork. Thereafter, until 18th, a steady succession of individuals was observed.

During the 12 days, 22 vagrants of 13 species were reported. Of these, 17 (77%) occurred in Scilly, Cornwall and Devon. Red-eyed Vireos were commonest, with five individuals, three of which appeared on 9th. Three each of Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Swainson's Thrush were also discovered. At the end of this period, on 17th, a Northern Parula was found in France. Fast-moving warm sectors, of the type described by Elkins (1979), arrived in the Southwest Approaches on 7th (see fig. 2) and 11th. The cold front associated with the second of these lay off the North American seaboard on 8th, and observers on a ship WSW of Bermuda reported over 1,000 small migrant songbirds on board on the evening of 9th (*Marine Observer* 58: 180), indicating the magnitude of the over-sea passage.

Autumn 1988

A multiple arrival of five Red-eyed Vireos during 26th-29th September heralded another succession of vagrants, with 18 individuals of seven species recorded between 26th September and 10th October. The period 22nd-27th September saw several warm sectors crossing the

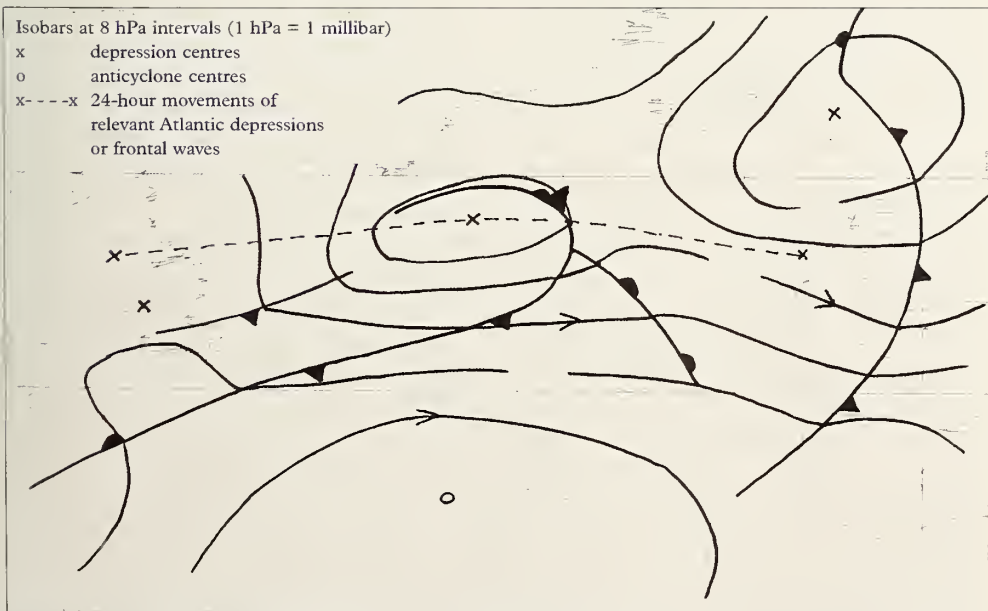


Figure 2. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UTC on 6th October 1987.

Atlantic and arriving in southwest Britain and Ireland. This pattern was repeated during 4th-8th October. Again, the 'fall' was dominated by Red-eyed Vireos, which provided 11 (61%) of the records. The only other species providing more than one individual was the Northern Parula, with two. Southwest England was the landfall of 44% of those recorded, and the remainder were much more widespread than in 1987, with records as far apart as Suffolk, the Outer Hebrides and Fair Isle, Shetland.

Autumn 1990

The first vagrants arrived on 20th September, at the start of a run of westerlies which reached Britain around a large anticyclone in mid-Atlantic. After a break in these from 23rd, further westerlies brought four Red-eyed Vireos between 29th and 30th. In both these spells, the birds' trajectories must initially have been well north of 50°N, latterly ahead of a long, waving cold front (see fig. 3). No more Nearctic passerine vagrants appeared until 6th October, when another fall was noted, with ten more individuals of five species up to

14th. Another Red-eyed Vireo was found, while three each of Grey-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes appeared, first in association with a warm sector arriving on 5th (see fig. 4), and latterly ahead of another trailing cold front which reached Britain on 9th. During 29th September to 14th October, six vagrants arrived in Scilly, while western Ireland played host to another five.

October 1991

After a small trickle of vagrants in late September, during a very unsettled westerly spell, a larger fall occurred during 6th-17th October. Ten individuals of five species were recorded, of which four were Red-eyed Vireos and three were Grey-cheeked Thrushes. The Atlantic weather systems in October were not typical of those normally associated with Nearctic vagrancy. The small fall during 11th-13th included two Red-eyed Vireos in eastern Britain, suggesting an earlier arrival, but the association with weather systems remains inconclusive.

October 1995

A small trickle of vagrants in late

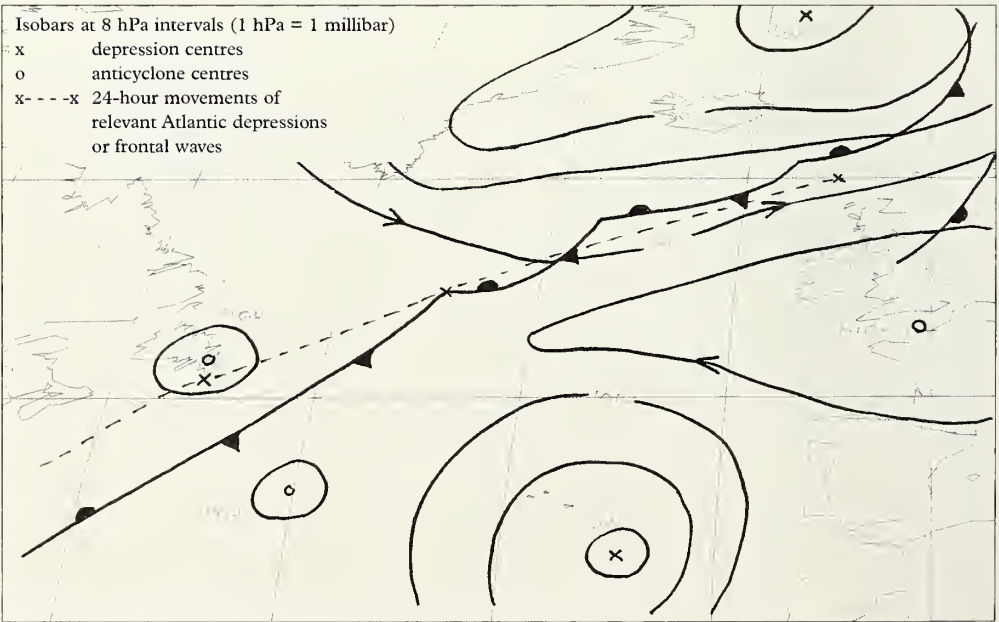


Figure 3. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UTC on 27th September 1990.

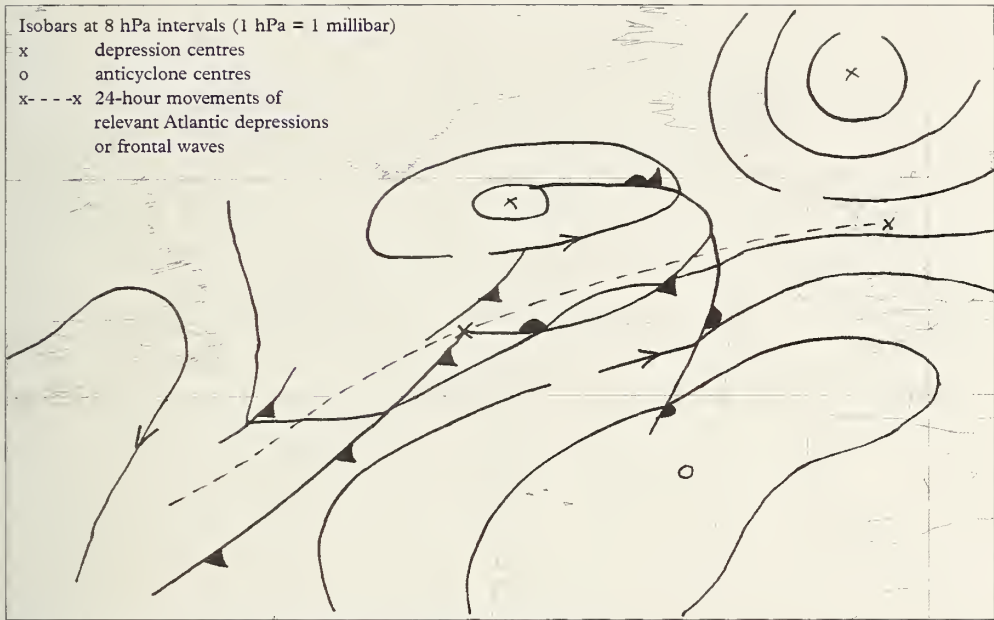


Figure 4. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UTC on 4th October 1990.

September and early October, including a Bay-breasted Warbler on 1st, has been linked (rather tenuously in my opinion) to the aftermath of hurricane 'Marilyn' off the eastern seaboard of the USA (Ferguson 1997) during the third week of September. This hurricane dissipated in the western Atlantic on 23rd, spawning no particularly vigorous transatlantic windflows. Some passage could, however, have begun over southeast Canada in the northwesterlies behind a cold front moving southeast late on 27th. Passage through the front to the southeast of Nova Scotia would have carried migrants into the warm sector, resulting in the small fall in Britain and Ireland from 30th September. This passage was reflected by a major fall of migrants on Bermuda at this time, with considerable movements of Red-eyed Vireos and Blackpoll Warblers in Connecticut on 28th.

On 7th October, a warm sector arrived in southwest Britain and Ireland, heralding a remarkable fall of both birds and butterflies. The latter consisted of Monarch butterflies *Danaus plexippus* which had begun to trickle in on 3rd (Nelson 1996). Unprecedented numbers of this highly migratory, North American

butterfly had been recorded on the eastern seaboard of the USA on 28th September, especially at Cape May (latitude 39°N), with many flying out to sea. A warm anticyclone had been present for some time, but the weakening cold front mentioned earlier reached the area that day. High pressure became re-established behind the front and maintained a steady cool ENE airflow south of 43°N until 1st October. Thus, no mechanism was available to initiate a transatlantic crossing from those latitudes for either bird or butterfly.

Most of the butterfly records occurred, however, during 8th-14th October, with no fewer than 48 on 8th. This fall almost coincided with the main arrival of vagrant birds, which began on 7th. Vagrants were found in the next five days at sites as far apart as Suffolk and Orkney, indicating further passage in fresh SSW winds. The date of the main Monarch butterfly influx (8th) (Coombes & Tucker 1996; Nelson 1996) seems strange, as 7th was a Saturday, and the activities of birdwatchers (who accounted for the majority of the butterfly sightings) were apparent from the Nearctic vagrants recorded that day. The lack of

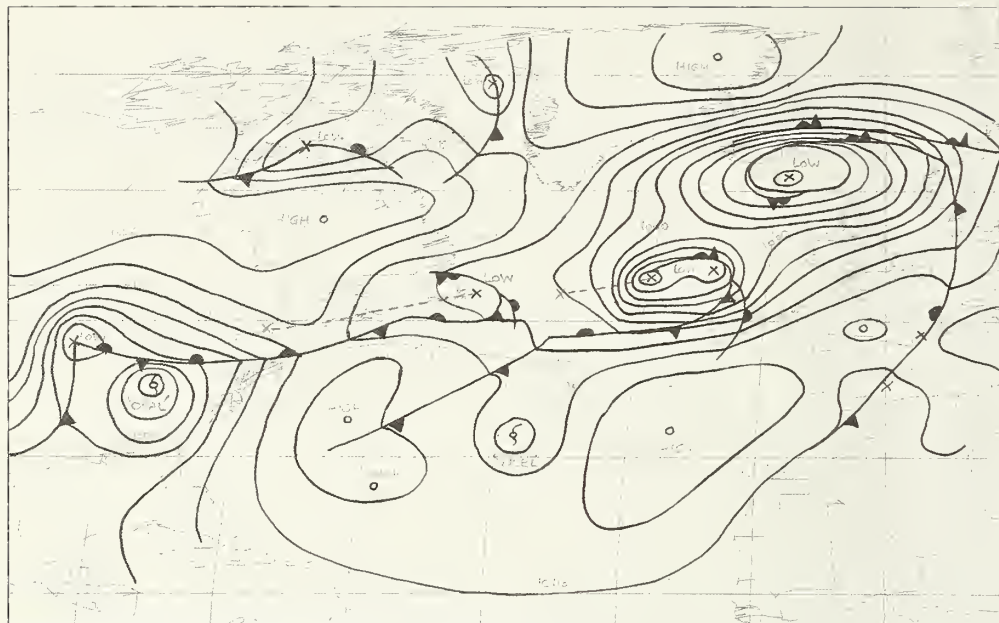


Figure 5. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UTC on 5th October 1995.

Isobars at 4 hPa intervals (1 hPa = 1 millibar)

x depression centres

o anticyclone centres

§ hurricane centres (named)

x - - - x 24-hour movements of relevant Atlantic depressions or frontal waves

⇒ ⇒ ⇒ hypothetical reverse movement of migrants, 3rd-4th October

————→ calculated track of Nearctic passerines arriving on 7th October (dated midnight positions shown)

sunshine on 7th may, however, have reduced butterfly activity, especially as any insects were probably newly arrived.

Calculated low-level trajectories (up to 1,000-1,500m altitude, and allowing for flight speed) suggest that the first of these birds may have departed from the eastern USA on the night of 3rd (local time). Of the 17 vagrant birds recorded during 7th-12th, no fewer than 11 were Red-eyed Vireos. This species is one for which I suggested (Elkins 1979) that transatlantic passage may arise from reverse movements. It is a species that does move northeastwards in southwesterlies ahead of a cold front (Nisbet 1963). Its preponderance in this 'fall' strongly supports this possibility. Warm southwesterlies developed ahead of the westernmost cold front as it began to return northwards as a warm front (fig. 5). This occurred in response to a shallow wave depression generated by a surge of tropical air from hurricane 'Opal' over the

Gulf of Mexico, and is remarkably similar to the situation preceding the fall of Nearctic birds in September 1975 (see fig. 2 in Elkins 1979). This wave depression ran quickly northeast on 4th to the south of the St Lawrence river, with the warm southwesterly airflow to the south of the depression centre probably carrying birds (and butterflies) out into the strengthening Atlantic westerlies. A further fast-moving warm-sector depression reached southwest Ireland on 11th, augmenting the influx of vagrants and including two Yellow Warblers.

From 15th, southwesterlies tracked ENE from the USA to the south of a waving cold front. This coincided with another small fall from 18th (see fig. 6), although the windflow arrived at latitudes farther north than those normally associated with vagrants. In this 'fall' there were, however, a Red-eyed Vireo in Dyfed, a Veery in the Outer Hebrides and a Hermit Thrush in Shetland.

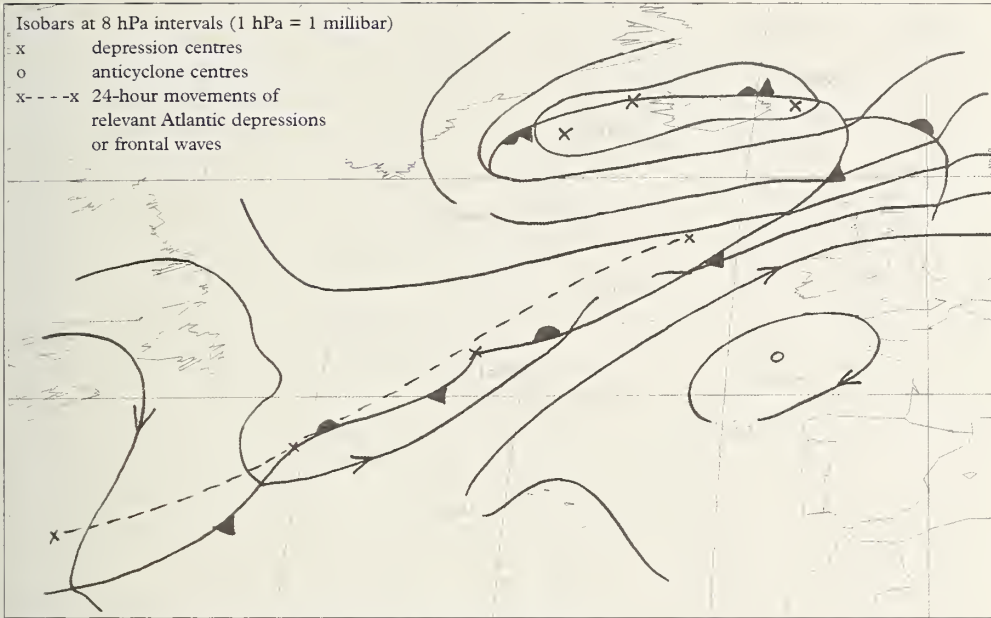


Figure 6. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UTC on 18th October 1995.

Autumn 1996

The first arrivals came on warm sectors at the end of September, particularly that of 28th September. October began with the Azores anticyclone farther north than normal. This deflected the westerly flow into higher latitudes, although one warm sector on 3rd

probably brought a small fall into Southwest England, to be recorded during the following weekend of 5th/6th (see fig. 7). This included two Red-eyed Vireos, a Black-and-white Warbler and a Bobolink. Further southwesterly winds on 11th gave rise to a trickle of vagrants during the

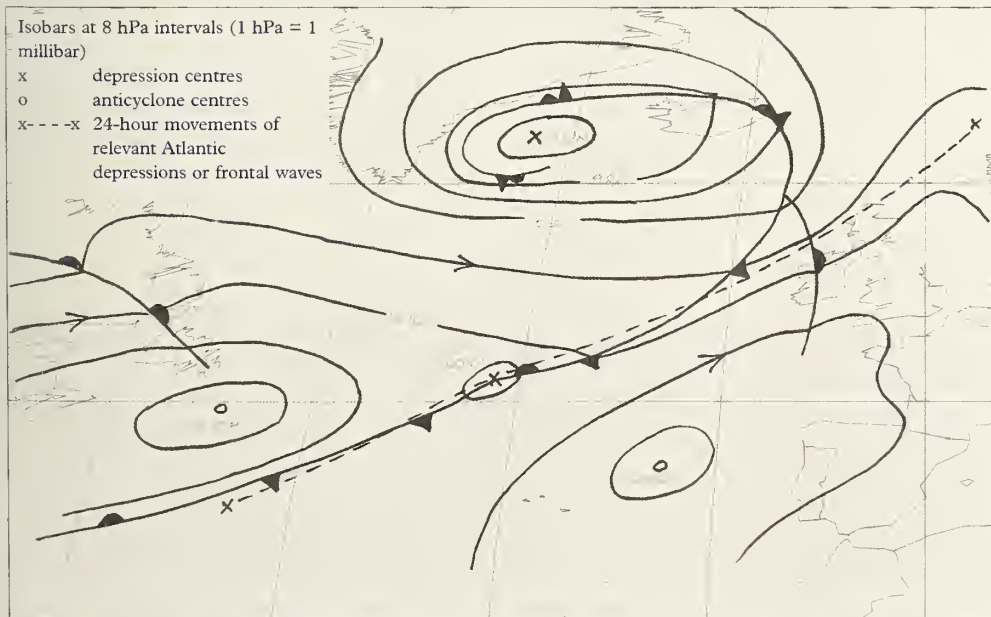


Figure 7. Synoptic chart for 18.00 UTC on 2nd October 1996.

following week, although transatlantic conditions were far from ideal. Among these were four Red-eyed Vireos, but Yellow-rumped Warblers, recorded in Iceland and the Netherlands, were not represented at all in Britain. Ex-hurricane 'Lili', which had passed Bermuda on 20th, arrived as an intense depression on 28th, but with no associated vagrants.

OTHER AUTUMNS

The other autumns in the decade received no significant falls. October 1992 was the coldest October in Britain since 1974. In both these years, westerlies were absent and northerlies more frequent. Five autumn vagrants appeared in 1992, compared with only one in 1974. Both 1993 and 1994 were poor years for Nearctic vagrants, and both were characterised by abnormal atmospheric circulation. The mean airflow direction in October 1993 was northeasterly, for the first time this century over Britain, while anticyclonic weather dominated October 1994. The exception was a small fall at the end of

the latter month, when two Yellow-billed Cuckoos and a Yellow-rumped Warbler were recorded on the last two days. This coincided with the arrival of a fast-moving, warm sector on 29th (see fig. 8). Nearctic vagrant totals in these three autumns were the lowest since 1978-80.

WINTER RECORDS

Few autumn vagrants are thought to survive the British winter, having often used more than their pre-migratory fat deposits during the ocean crossing. Two of the mildest winters on record did, however, fall within the decade. One of these, that of 1988/89, came after a good autumn for vagrants. No fewer than three individuals were recorded in January, equalling that month's total over the past 20 years. These were one each of Baltimore Oriole, Common Yellowthroat, and Golden-winged Warbler. Only the first-named species had been identified in the previous autumn. Their ability to overwinter may have been related to the unusual climatic conditions, although Common Yellowthroats do winter in the southern USA.

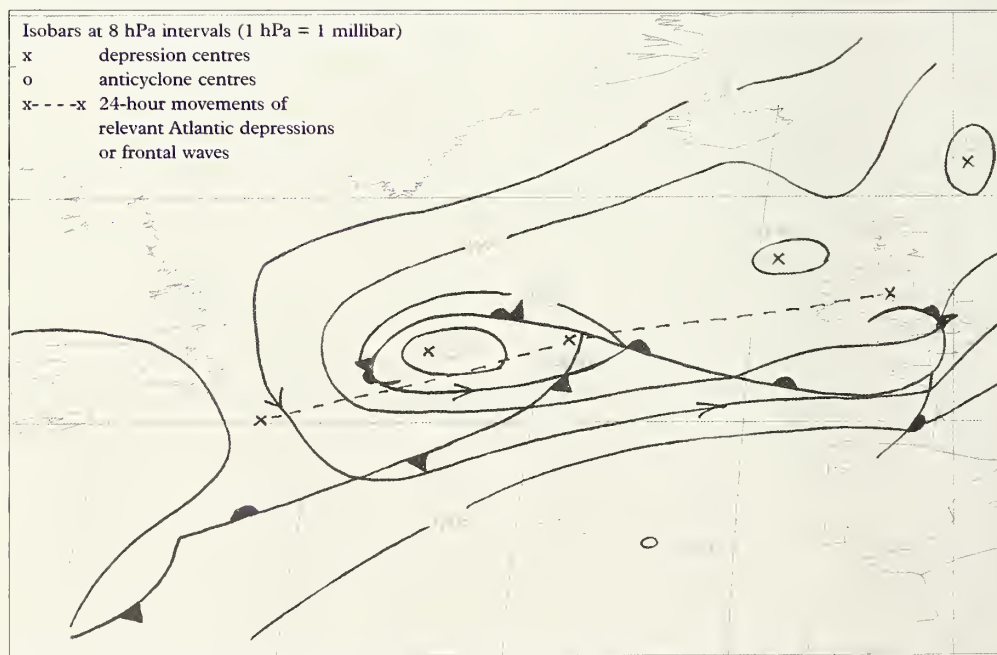


Figure 8. Synoptic chart for 06.00 UTC on 29th October 1994.

SPECIES	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Black-billed Cuckoo			1	1						
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	2		4		2			2	1	
Common Nighthawk			1							
Chimney Swift	1				1					
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			1							
Cliff Swallow		1							2	1
Buff-bellied Pipit		1								1
Wood Thrush	1									
Hermit Thrush	1						1	1	1	
Swainson's Thrush	3			4	1		1		1	1
Grey-cheeked Thrush		1	1	4	4		1	1		
Veery	1								1	
Red-breasted Nuthatch			1							
Yellow-throated Vireo				1				2		
Philadelphia Vireo	1									
Red-eyed Vireo	6	12	3	10	6	1	3	1	21	10
Black-and-white Warbler	1									4
Tennessee Warbler									1	
Northern Parula	1	2	1			1			1	
Yellow Warbler				1		1			2	
Chestnut-sided Warbler									1	
Blackburnian Warbler		1								
Yellow-rumped Warbler	1						1		2	
Bay-breasted Warbler									1	
Blackpoll Warbler	1	1		2	1		2		2	1
Ovenbird				1						
Northern Waterthrush		1	1							1
Common Yellowthroat										1
Hooded Warbler						1				
Savannah Sparrow	1									
Song Sparrow								1		
White-crowned Sparrow									1	
White-throated Sparrow										1
Dark-eyed Junco							1			
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	1			1		1		1	
Indigo Bunting										1
Bobolink					2	1			1	2
Baltimore Oriole		2								1

Table 1. Annual totals of Nearctic landbird species occurring in Britain and Ireland in autumn during 1987-96.

SPRING RECORDS

As in previous decades, the majority of spring records were of North American sparrows (Emberizidae) (table 2), and dates of first sighting frequently coincided with settled anticyclonic weather. Also,

coincidentally, there were no spring records after the poor autumns of 1992-94. Before the apparently obvious conclusion is drawn, however, that spring birds are autumn individuals that have overwintered, there were a number of

SPECIES	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Eastern Phoebe	2									
Tree Swallow				1						
Northern Mockingbird		1								
Lark Sparrow					1					
Song Sparrow			1							
White-throated Sparrow	1		1		1					1
Dark-eyed Junco	1				1					2
Brown-headed Cowbird		1								

Table 2. Annual totals of Nearctic landbird species occurring in Britain and Ireland in spring during 1987-96.

spring records after the very lean autumns of the early 1970s. The provenance of these birds therefore remains a mystery, although, in a postscript to Elkins (1979), I did indicate a possible link to weather systems in the bumper May of 1977. It is nevertheless of interest to note that at least a part of the population of all those vagrant species which have occurred in winter and spring also overwinters in eastern North America, with a few in Bermuda, although it is not clear what relationship this may have to vagrancy.

DISCUSSION

Several of the situations discussed above were of the type associated with classic disorientation in cold fronts off eastern North America. There was also evidence that many were of the reverse-movement type, with warm southwesterlies over the eastern seaboard of North America. Both were described by Elkins (1979). The numbers of Red-eyed Vireos were at an all-time peak during the period. Indeed, in 1995, when 21 were recorded in Britain and Ireland, the species also appeared in Iceland, France, Belgium and Spain. Red-eyed Vireos arrive at a time when they are normally well south in the USA, and transatlantic crossings may arise from reverse movements (i.e. misorientation in a direction opposite to normal: Alerstam 1990). The arrival of two Yellow Warblers in southern Ireland on 11th-12th October may support this. Yellow Warblers are only stragglers to the east coast of the USA in October and are also well south on their migratory route by then (*BWP*). This suggests that they were also of a more southerly provenance and undertaking a reverse movement. In 1989, as late as 7th October, 23 Red-eyed Vireos were recorded in Newfoundland, along with other vagrants (Mactavish 1990). This is outside the vireos' breeding range and, because the weather was fine and therefore not conducive to a fall of migrants, it was suggested that they might have moved northeast in the

southwest upper winds that had prevailed over the region for several days. Many must have continued out over the Atlantic Ocean. One Red-eyed Vireo was found in Britain that October (on 11th).

Unpublished studies of Nearctic Lepidoptera vagrancy suggest that their entire crossing is in warm sectors (see Elkins 1979), and the 1995 Monarch butterfly influx has been attributed to the hurricane-generated tropical airflow over the eastern seaboard of the USA (Nelson 1996). The 1995 vireos may therefore have had a similar origin to that of the butterflies. British records of Monarchs in 1995 (Nelson 1996) showed, however, a very strong coastal distribution between Scilly and Hampshire. The airstreams on 8th October, the first day on which large numbers of Monarchs were observed, and during 12th-14th were mainly warm southerlies. An eastern Atlantic source (e.g. the Monarch populations which colonised the Azores, the Canary Islands and Iberia during the last two centuries) cannot therefore be excluded, although these populations are thought to be more sedentary than are those of North America.

It is necessary to emphasise again that hurricanes are unlikely to be directly responsible for transatlantic vagrancy. The storms themselves invariably move too slowly and have too vigorous a circulation for vagrants to survive a crossing. Examples abound of shipping within hurricanes being inundated with hundreds of passerine migrants. During the decade under review, hurricane 'Emily' deposited 10,000 Bobolinks and thousands of wood-warblers on Bermuda on 25th September 1987 (Case & Gerrish 1988). No vagrancy was recorded in Europe as a result of this storm. Such tropical storms do, however, often draw warm moist air northwards, sometimes spawning suitable wave depressions, such as those which occurred in September 1975 and October 1995.

I have postulated (Elkins 1988) that few transatlantic vagrants have been missed

SPECIES	NUMBER RECORDED
Red-eyed Vireo	107
Grey-cheeked Thrush	43
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	35
Blackpoll Warbler	34
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	22
Swainson's Thrush	20
Bobolink	19
Yellow-rumped Warbler	18
Northern Parula	15
Common Nighthawk	11
Black-and-white Warbler	11
Baltimore Oriole	10

Table 3. The twelve most frequent Nearctic landbird vagrants in autumn in Britain and Ireland during 1967-96.

by observers in recent years in the well-watched regions of southwest England and southern Ireland, where most birds make landfall. Fraser (1997) suggested that only 11% of all rare passerines and near-passerines elude observers in the well-covered sites of the Isles of Scilly and Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, compared with 53% along the south coast of England. Sharrock & Fraser (1997) subsequently calculated, however, that the proportion of rarities missed was currently over two-thirds. Fraser (1997) also pointed out that 40% of rare passerines in Scilly have been recorded on one day only, with 15% on two days. In comparison, Coombes & Tucker (1996) noted that large falls of Monarch butterflies show a sudden, unaccountable (but probably weather-related) decrease in records after seven to ten days.

Robbins (1980) listed those species most likely to undertake a transatlantic crossing. He based his predictions on various parameters, including the species' abundance on the eastern seaboard of North America, body weight and its variability, migratory distance, and date of migration. Robbins' top 20 species included the eight most abundant vagrant species recorded during 1967-96 (table 3). Three of the remainder, however, are still to be recorded in Britain and Ireland, and five of the species newly recorded in Britain and Ireland during the period since his review were not predicted by him.

The decrease in vagrant records during the early 1990s could be a result of several factors. Concern has been expressed in North America about the substantial decline in numbers of long-distance migrant songbirds. These decreases have been tentatively ascribed to deforestation, not only in breeding habitat, but also in wintering habitat in the Neotropics (including the West Indies) (Morton & Greenberg 1989; Wunderle & Waide 1993; Rappole & McDonald 1994). The North American Breeding Bird Survey shows, however, that, although nearly 55% of such migrants suffered population declines in the 1980s following a period of increase, population levels in 1991 were still above those in 1966 (Peterjohn 1994). For the period of his study (1947-76), Robbins (1980) was unable to find a constant correlation between annual population levels in eastern North America and subsequent vagrancy in Britain and Ireland. The steady increase in the vagrancy of Red-eyed Vireos has, however, been mirrored by population growth in both northeastern USA and southeastern Canada (Darveau *et al.* 1992; Blake *et al.* 1994). This widespread and abundant species appears to be less affected by breeding-habitat change than many other species, but nevertheless did show a temporary decline (in some states at least) in the 1980s (Blake *et al.* 1994). Of the four species for which vagrancy has decreased markedly, three (Yellow-billed

Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk and Grey-cheeked Thrush) have undergone substantial population declines in some parts of eastern North America. Other species in table 3 have shown population trends often contrary to trends in vagrancy (Chandler S. Robbins *in litt.*).

Moss (1998) implied that changes in the number of vagrants occurring in northwest Europe could be associated with the effects of global warming on the North Atlantic depression tracks. As evidence, he invoked a recent increase in records away (farther north) from the traditional southwestern landfall region. The percentage of records south of latitude 53°N in each of the main autumns during the last two decades has fluctuated between 71% and 92%. Those vagrants identified in western Scotland and Northern Ireland have shown no consistent increase, but no conclusions can be drawn in view of the generally poor coverage over such a large region. In fact, it has already been suggested that the incidence of deep depressions in autumn in more southern latitudes may have increased (Elkins & Yésou 1998) in the last 20 years. A study of atmospheric-pressure anomalies across Britain for October during the period 1977-96 shows a large inter-annual variability. The mean sea-level pressures at two sites at the extremities of Britain, Cape Wrath and Land's End, were around 1.5 to 2.5 hPa (= millibars) below the long-term average (1951-80), while the mean difference between the sites exceeded the normal by 1 hPa. This indicates a southward shift in depression tracks and/or increased depth (and activity) of depressions. Increased storminess has indeed been found for the northeast Atlantic sector during winter over the past two or three decades (Schmith *et al.* 1998), particularly in the Faroe Islands, but no explanation has been offered. Thus, it would be imprudent to attribute perceived changes in vagrancy to global warming given our present state of knowledge.

During 1987-96, the worst autumns for western Europe's vagrant-seekers coincided with unsuitable atmospheric conditions. Although the total number of vagrant landbirds rose in 1995, so did the variety of species recorded. Of those species in table 3, all but three (Yellow-rumped and Black-and-white Warblers and Baltimore Oriole) winter solely in the Neotropics. It also remains a fact that only two species (Red-eyed Vireo and Swainson's Thrush) showed an increase in vagrancy during the decade under review, so that the population factor may indeed be real.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, for access to its excellent and comprehensive library; and to the Meteorological Office and Deutsche Wetterdienst, from whose products the synoptic charts were compiled. Thanks are also due to Paul Milne, Hon. Secretary of the Irish Rare Birds Committee, for providing information on 1996 Irish rarities; and Dr Chandler S. Robbins, for his detailed comments on population trends in North America.

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Appendix 1. Scientific names of species mentioned in the text.

Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>
Common Nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Dendroica fusca</i>
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	Bay-breasted Warbler	<i>Dendroica castanea</i>
Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Dendroica striata</i>
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>
Cliff Swallow	<i>Hirundo pyrrhonota</i>	Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>
Buff-bellied Pipit	<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	Northern Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>
Northern Mockingbird	<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	Hooded Warbler	<i>Wilsonia citrina</i>
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	Scarlet Tanager	<i>Piranga olivacea</i>
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>
Grey-cheeked Thrush	<i>Catharus minimus</i>	Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
Yellow-throated Vireo	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Philadelphia Vireo	<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>
Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>
Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>
Northern Parula	<i>Parula americana</i>		



Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (David Quinn)

HUME'S WARBLER IN SUSSEX: NEW TO BRITAIN AND IRELAND

PETER CLEMENT AND R. E. SCOTT

It was Horace Alexander (1955) who first drew the attention of British birdwatchers, principally observatory workers, to the fact that the (then) Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus humei* was a serious contender for addition to the British List. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s saw Hume's Warbler *P. humei* travel a rather familiar road to full species status, with several articles on its field identification (e.g. Wallace 1973; Meek 1978; Madge 1985; van der Have 1985; Svensson 1987; Shirihihi & Madge 1993; Willoughby 1994; Madge & Quinn 1997). The British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC), in its twenty-third report (1997), formally announced that 'it seems appropriate to treat *P. inornatus* (monotypic) and *P. humei* (including *P. h. mandellii*) as separate species', and in its twenty-fourth report (1998) added the species to Category A of the British List, on the strength of a sight record at Beachy Head, East Sussex, during 14th–17th November 1966. Subsequent records have been reviewed by the British Birds Rarities Committee and a

total of 27 has now been accepted, up to the end of 1997 (Rogers *et al.* 1998).

The Beachy Head bird was found by PC on 13th November (Quinn & Clement 1979) – one day earlier than the date recorded by the BOURC (1998) – and subsequently seen that day by Roger Charlwood, Barry Cooper, Brian Metcalfe and Tony Quinn. The following morning, Roger Charlwood telephoned RES at Dungeness to inform him of the bird's presence and the two of them spent over an hour watching the individual on 14th November. Throughout its stay (the bird was last seen on 17th November), it frequented the Belle Tout wood at Beachy Head, apparently preferring the canopy, but at times coming almost to ground level, when it presented excellent views. An account of the observations, including a detailed description, has been published previously (Scott 1979), but salient features are repeated here.

The bird resembled a Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* in size, shape, movements and behaviour. The key initial

distinguishing features were the generally dull appearance and the presence of just a single wing-bar on each wing. The only yellow present in the plumage was a small mark on the underwing at the carpal joint, and the faintest of yellow suffusion on the breast. The remainder of the plumage lacked any yellow, this being particularly noticeable on the upperparts, which were mainly greyish-olive, the dirty-white supercilium and the buffish-white wing-bar at the tips of the greater coverts. The left wing showed no trace of a second wing-bar, but the right wing showed a barely perceptible bar formed by tips to the median coverts. The voice was described by Roger Charlwood (verbally) as a 'loud ringing note' and by Quinn & Clement (1971) as a 'loud, disyllabic "puit-chu" and "che-ee"'.

The only relevant literature available to us in 1966 was Williamson (1962) and Ticehurst (1938) and, after consulting those two publications, it was considered that the bird was *humei* because of the following features: (1) greyish-olive (not green) upperparts and lack of striking yellow in fringes of primaries; (2) lack of yellow on underparts; (3) lack of yellow in supercilium and wing-bar; (4) absent or indistinct median-covert wing-bar; (5) call-note. In addition, the late date is more typical of far-eastern *Phylloscopus* warblers than of Yellow-browed Warbler, which usually appears in September and early October, although November records, and even overwintering individuals in southern England, are not unknown.

More recently, it has been shown that separation from Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* needs to be taken into account, because of the similarity of their call-notes (Madge & Quinn 1997). In fresh plumage, the longer wing-bar and whitish fringes and tips to the tertials are all diagnostic of *humei*. Both Hume's and Yellow-browed generally show a flatter or less domed crown than that of Greenish. In addition, the bill of Hume's lacks the extensive pinkish lower mandible of Greenish. The Beachy Head bird was noted to have a dark bill, with only the base of the lower mandible orangey-flesh-coloured.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Roger Charlwood kindly read an early draft of this paper.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Colin Bradshaw, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'There was little doubt about the identification of this bird, although the record did require two circulations. In the original published

description, the call was ambiguously described. Copies of notes from Pete Clement cleared this up for us. It speaks for the quality of the observers that we are able to accept a record based on their notes taken in 1966, when observers were much less familiar with the species than they are now.

The difficulty of identifying a Hume's Warbler varies at different times of the year. In fresh autumn plumage, there is less scope for confusion with either Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* or Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*. This potential for confusion, however, increases in worn spring plumages.

At all times of year, the call is probably the easiest way of separating Hume's Warbler from Yellow-browed Warbler. The typical call of Hume's Warbler is a sparrow-like, disyllabic "chirr-oo", usually with a distinct downward inflection at the end (although sometimes it is at the same pitch as the first syllable). Other common calls were discussed by Steve Madge (*Brit. Birds* 90: 571-575). Yellow-browed Warbler has a loud, Coal Tit-like "tswee-ee", with a definite upward inflection to the second

syllable. The songs are equally distinctive, though less relevant for identification in Britain. Hume's Warbler has an explosive repetition of its "chirr-oo" call, followed by a loud rasping "swееееее", very similar to Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*. The song of Yellow-browed Warbler is more like that of a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, with a thin high-pitched "tseu-tsee-tsu-tsee-tsee".

Plumage differences between the two species depend on the degree of wear of the plumage. Compared with Yellow-browed Warbler in fresh autumn plumage, Hume's Warbler is dull and lacks yellow in its plumage. The upperpart colour is greyer and there is less contrast with the underparts, which often appear silvery on Yellow-browed Warbler. Although there are pale tertial edges and wing-bars, these are much less obvious than on Yellow-browed Warbler. The ground colour of the tertials, the base of the secondaries and the greater coverts is a dull grey-brown and the tertial edges and wing-bars are a pale buff. This provides a lack of contrast in the wing, especially with the median-covert bar, which can be so small as to be missed in the field. This is quite different from



18. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Brighton, East Sussex, November 1997 (S. Knight)



19. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, February 1995 (Dave Nye)

Yellow-browed Warbler, which has black tertials, base of secondaries and centres of greater coverts, contrasting sharply with the white or cream of the median- and greater-covert bars and tertial edges. By November, many Hume's Warblers can appear to lack both a median-covert wing-bar and pale tertial edges, which is unusual at that time of year for Yellow-browed Warbler. In addition, the supercilium of Hume's Warbler is more subdued, narrower behind the eye, slightly flared, but often less distinct in front of the eye. Yellow-browed tends to have a supercilium which is narrower, but clearly defined in front of the eye and often flares behind the eye. These plumage differences are much less obvious in spring, when Yellow-browed Warblers can look dowdy, lack green and yellow tones and can also have both tertial edges and upper wing-bar worn away.

'At all times of year, there are persistent differences in bare-part colour and call. The latter is the best way of separating the two species at all times of the year. Hume's Warbler has a bill which frequently looks all dark in the field. On close views, there is

often a small amount of pale pink at the base, whilst Yellow-browed Warbler will often show a lower mandible which is almost all pale pink or yellow with only a dark tip. The legs of Hume's Warbler are generally all dark (although the soles are often pink), while Yellow-browed Warbler usually shows at least some pink or orange on the rear of the legs.

'Problems in separating Hume's Warbler from Greenish are usually caused by the similarities of the call. The typical call of Greenish Warbler is a loud "chirree", somewhat like that of a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. The essential difference from Hume's Warbler is that the second syllable of the Greenish Warbler call is definitely at a higher pitch. Greenish Warbler is a larger bird, and is more brightly coloured in autumn, with silky white underparts and obviously green upperparts. The bill is larger and usually has extensive areas of pale on the lower mandible. There are never any pale edges to the tertials, is rarely any sign of a second wing-bar and the greater-covert wing-bar is a different shape, being shorter and thinner. In worn spring plumage, Greenish and Hume's



20. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Flamborough Head, North Yorkshire, November 1993 (John Harriman)

Warblers can look very similar, but the size and bill shape and colour should be enough to separate the two.'

Tony Marr, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented: 'The announcement by the BOURC in 1997 that Hume's Warbler was a distinct species was immediately followed by an examination by the BBRC and the BOURC of a number of claimed potential British records. The BBRC confirmed the identification of the 1966 Sussex bird and passed it to the BOURC to consider for admission to the British List as the first for Britain and Ireland.

'Some members of the BOURC had seen the files relating to this and several of the subsequent claims during the taxonomic review which had resulted in the split of the species from Yellow-browed Warbler (*Ibis* 139: 197-201). They and the other members had no problems with the identification of the Sussex bird, and it was accepted on a single circulation into Category A as the first record for Britain and Ireland (*Ibis* 140: 182-184).

'The species has been recorded as a vagrant to most countries in northwest

Europe, including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden; and elsewhere in the Western Palearctic, to Italy and Israel. There are 27 British records accepted up to the end of 1997.

'Arrivals of Hume's Warbler are usually later in the autumn than those of Yellow-browed Warbler, between mid-October and mid-November. They often coincide with the appearance of Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* rather than with the somewhat earlier arrival of most Yellow-browed Warblers.

'Formerly called by some authorities the South-central Asian Yellow-browed Warbler, as distinct from the nominate form being called the Siberian race, Hume's Warbler breeds in the higher wooded parts of the northwest Himalayas from northwest India to the Tien Shan mountains. It winters mainly in the western Himalayas, and over much of northern peninsular India, from Pakistan east to Sikkim and Bangladesh. It also winters in Afghanistan and Iran, with recent records from Iraq and eastern Arabia.'



REVIEWS

The Handbook of Bird Identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic

By Mark Beaman & Steve Madge;
illustrated by Hilary Burn, Martin Elliott,
Alan Harris, Peter Hayman, Laurel Tucker
& Dan Zetterström.

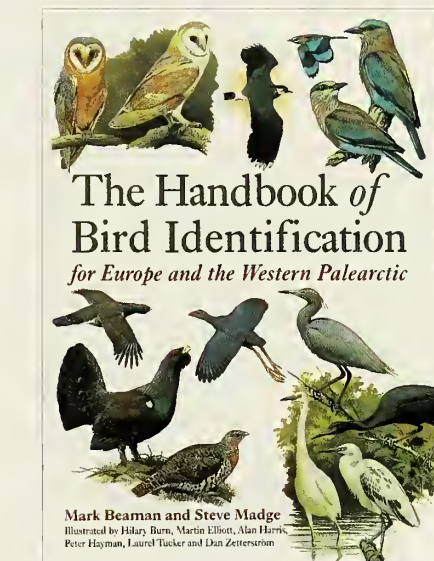
Christopher Helm, London. 1998.

868 pages; 51 explanatory figures; 293
colour plates and 59 text illustrations;
637 distribution maps.

ISBN 0-7136-3960-1. £65.00.

This thumping tome purports to expedite the identification of the 'almost 900' Western Palearctic species reliably recorded up to 1996 or, as counted by me, 511 non-passerines and 374 passerines, with most plumages of all but 13 illustrated in colour. Their texts and figures occupy from one-third of a page, for easily distinguished birds, to two pages, for species with complex plumage progressions or pitfalls. Thus, 'HBI' is not so comprehensive as 'BWPC' (936 species), but the degree of imparted knowledge does compete with that in the modern family monographs, leaving most field and photographic guides trailing. Furthermore, the aptly illustrated introduction to field identification will help the beginner, and the specific diagnoses which follow it, honed particularly by welcome new comments on jizz, are adept syntheses of the current criteria.

In daily use, however, I found the small typeface 'slippery' and the resultant need to concentrate closely on the book's contents has provoked a few nagging misgivings. Witness no direct references to the first bricks (papers) of the identification literature, some confusing attributions of age and plumage-state within the plates, and scant guidance on rarity vectors and



occurrences in Britain (or any other country). These imperfections reduce the usefulness of the first edition to student observers.

Within the considerable artistry of the plates and text figures, my favourites are the lively wildfowl, the excellent raptors and the brilliantly conceived skuas and gulls, but I fear that some of those of the passerines will be judged less successful. It is a dreadful question, but can any artist really compete with today's revelatory photographs of small birds?

Having also slogged along Mark's and Steve's path, I have a fair idea of the effort that this book demanded of them and their artists. So, to test the achievement of its stated purpose fairly, I chose 20 difficult species and scored the *HBI* treatments against my own most trusted references (of other authors). The resultant marks of 77% for texts and 67% for figures would together have been sufficient under old exam rules for a 'Distinction'.

For what it has (finally) delivered, the value of *HBI* as a précis of the Western Palearctic identification literature is outstanding. It occupies a place on my nearest bookshelf and deserves a similar position on others.

D. I. M. WALLACE

In-hand Identification Guide to Palearctic Raptors

By William S. Clark & Reuven Yosef.
International Birdwatching Center, Eilat.
1998. 65 pages; 143 colour plates.
Paperback. \$20.00.

This book left me wanting to know more, and is a missed opportunity. It could, with more thought, have added significantly to the identification tools available to ringers or even to those who obtain a prolonged, close view of a bird of prey and want to determine its identity, age or sex. It is a pity that the standard for in-the-hand identification set by Svensson (1970, 1975, 1984, 1992), Jenni & Winkler (1994) and Baker (1993) has not been aspired to by such a competent raptor man as Bill Clark.

One or two pages are devoted to each of the 36 species covered. Much of the space is taken up with photographs, which have, however, not been used to the full. Explanatory captions and cross-reference to the short text would have been useful. Photographs with expanded captions could so easily have pointed out the features that are important for ageing, sexing and even identification. The pictures of Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, for example, definitely need captions to draw attention to the differences between adults and juveniles.

I was also not comfortable with some of the photographs. The use of stuffed birds (e.g. juvenile Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*) is questionable, as is the method of holding some of the birds (the Eastern Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* is particularly disturbing).

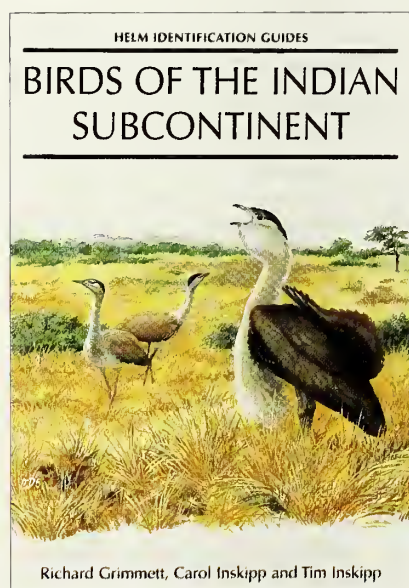
The section on measurements is very brief and there is no help given on races. For example, those Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* with a wing chord larger than 330 mm are said to be females and those smaller stated to be males. Yet, in Scandinavia, males can reach 335 mm.

And why were two very tricky Palearctic raptors, the '*fulvescens*' form of the Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, and Tawny Eagle *A. rapax*, not included? They would have been very useful additions.

RICHARD PORTER

Birds of the Indian Subcontinent

By Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp, with the collaboration of Sarath Kotagama & Shahid Ali; illustrated by Clive Byers, Daniel Cole, John Cox, Gerald Driessens, Carl D'Silva, Martin Elliott, Kim Franklin, Alan Harris, Peter Hayman, Craig Robson, Jan Wilczur & Tim Worfolk. Christopher Helm, London. 1998.
888 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4004-9. £55.00.



A weighty 'field guide' in every sense, tipping the scales at 2.17 kg, with 514 pages of species texts, and 153 colour plates. Coverage is comprehensive for India (including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives: 1,295 species (including around 100 vagrants), of which 1,006 are resident in and 141 endemic to the region.

The sequence and nomenclature are those of *An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region* by Inskipp, Lindsey & Duckworth/Oriental Bird Club (1996), where taxonomic decisions, such as lumping of Western and Eastern Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*/*C. spilonotus* and splitting of Audubon's and Persian Shearwaters *Puffinus lherminieri*/*P. persicus*, are explained. This is the first field guide to follow the new Sibley & Monroe sequence and will mean much use of the index until it becomes more familiar.

The authors' extensive field experience is clearly evident in the text. Each species account is organised under a series of standard headings: Identification, Voice, Habits, Habitat, Breeding, Distribution and Status (detailed for each of the seven countries of the region), and References. Alternative English and scientific names used in other guides to the region are also listed. Disappointingly, no indication of range outside the subcontinent is given.

An important feature is the range maps, the first in detail for the region, and herein lies my only real criticism. Only those maps showing resident range as a solid block of ink, or isolated sites as a cross, are clear. The shading used for seasonal distribution is frequently so indistinct as to be virtually invisible. This may be a result of poor printing – the map for Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, for example, is legible – but I hope that this feature will be improved in future editions, which will surely appear.

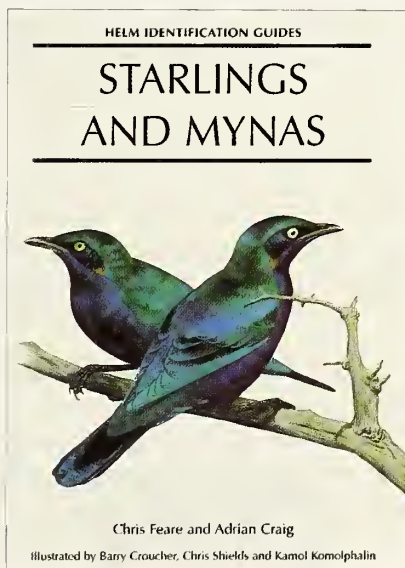
The colour plates are mostly excellent, though some species are reproduced rather small, and no scale is given. I particularly liked those by Clive Byers, of difficult groups such as the warblers, Tim Worfolk's large raptors, and Alan Harris's mouthwatering chats, redstarts and forktails.

If you have ever been or ever planned to go to the subcontinent, this is an essential purchase. I wish that I had had a copy in my luggage on my two visits.

IAN DAWSON

Starlings and Mynas

By Chris Feare & Adrian Craig;
illustrated by Barry Croucher,
Chris Shields & Kamol Komolphalin.
Christopher Helm, London. 1998.
285 pages. ISBN 0-7136-3961-X. £32.00.



The latest offering in this series follows the now-familiar format. The authors recognise 114 living species – more than most treatments, splitting Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* into four species, for example. Less than half a page to rather more than five pages of text are allocated per species. The introduction includes much of interest: for example, the frontal crests of *Acridotheres* mynas may have a role in pollination and be a case of co-evolution between these birds and their favoured trees.

Unfortunately, there is nothing to tell us which of the three artists painted which of the 32 colour plates. These are of mixed quality: the typical Asian starlings and mynas are very disappointing, while the paintings of the African glossy starlings *Lamprolornis* capture well the iridescence and character of these stunning birds. Plates and text do not always agree (e.g. for Spot-winged Starling *Saroglossa spiloptera*).

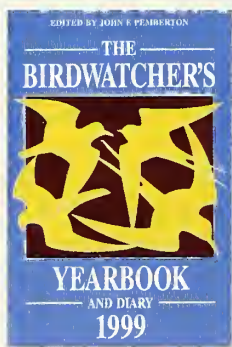
This book attempts to synthesise the

literature on starling biology as, surprisingly, there has never been a monograph on the family before. In this aim, rather than as an identification guide, it succeeds admirably. There is nothing new, for example, on the subject of the identification of Common *Sturnus vulgaris* versus Spotless Starling *S. unicolor*, but the references listed are commendably up to date.

IAN DAWSON

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1999

Edited by John E. Pemberton.
Buckingham Press, Christchurch, 1998.
320 pages. ISBN 0-9533840-0-4.
Paperback £12.99.



Its now familiar nine parts include Directories, a Diary, Log Charts and Features. The latter contains eight articles ranging from 'Birds and Birdwatching on the Web' to 'Managing Woodland for Birds', and in another I discovered the difference between seawatching and seabirding. In the County Directory, disbanded counties (e.g. Avon) are no longer listed, but there is no consistent treatment of the new Unitary Authorities: South Gloucestershire just gets a mention under Somerset and Bristol, but is still North Avon under Gloucestershire, and Bath & North-east Somerset is not even listed. No doubt these trifles will be sorted out by the year 2000. This excellent annual should be a vital component of any active

birdwatcher's kit, be it in the library or the rucksack.

RICHARD PORTER

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This invaluable reference book contains the names and addresses of all the County/Regional Recorders.

The Birds of St Helena

By Beau W. Rowlands, Trevor Trueman, Storrs L. Olson, M. Neil McCulloch & Richard K. Brooke.

British Ornithologists' Union, Tring, 1998.
296 pages. ISBN 0-907446-20-5. £20.00 UK & EU; £23.00/US\$38.00 elsewhere.

Of the 109 species listed as occurring since 1502 (when St Helena was discovered), only 19 now breed, of which nine are introduced and only one (the endangered St Helena Plover or Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*) is endemic. Another eight endemics have become extinct. Most of the rest are failed introductions or vagrants. These meagre statistics encapsulate the dire consequences of Man's impact on this remote oceanic island, which may have once supported as many as 10 million breeding seabirds. The history of this island's birds is thoroughly documented in 13 wide-ranging introductory chapters and in the very detailed systematic list. Fifty colour photographs illustrate habitats and some birds in this exemplary, sixteenth BOU checklist.

RICHARD PORTER

ALSO RECEIVED:

Photographic Handbook of the Seabirds of the World

By Jim Enticott & David Tipling. New Holland Publishers, London. Revised edition, 1998. 234 pages. ISBN 1-85974-052-9. £29.99. First edition reviewed *Brit. Birds* 90: 528-529.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

COLOUR-MARKED BIRDS: A REMINDER

Although colour-marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), the majority of studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals. Only in exceptional instances do we publish separate requests on this subject (there are far too many such studies to include them all). If you see a marked bird (other than with an ordinary BTO ring), please report it as follows:

CORMORANTS: Jenny Kent, 8 Manor Road, Collingham, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 7PJ.

WILDFOWL: Richard Hearn, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT. E-mail: richard.hearn@wwt.org.uk

WADERS: Stephen Browne, Wader Study Group, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. E-mail: harriet.mead@bto.org.uk

GULLS: **Large gulls:** Peter Rock, 59 Concorde Drive, Bristol BS10 6PX.
Small gulls: Kjeld Pedersen, Daglykkevej 7, DK-2650 Hvidovre, Denmark.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Bridget Griffin, BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF RARE BIRDS

We plan regularly to include photographs of recent rarities and other interesting birds in our 'Recent reports' feature.

Bird photographers are asked to send prints or transparencies of their best photographs for possible inclusion in this feature. The usual fees will, of course, be paid for these photographs. Please send prints to Mrs Frances Bucknell, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

CUMBRIA BREEDING ATLAS

On 6th February 1999, at Penrith, Cumbria, a Breeding Atlas Conference will be held to promote the forthcoming fieldwork for the Cumbria Breeding Bird Atlas. Speakers scheduled include Chris Mead talking on the 'State of the Nation's Birds', David Gibbons on the 'Threatened Monserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi*' and Bob Scott on 'Some Ornithological Reminiscences'. The cost for the day will be £10.00. Details from John Callion, The Cherries, Scawfield, High Harrington, Cumbria CA14 4LZ; tel: 01946 830651.

KOS ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

The Kent Ornithological Society (KOS) is continuing its tradition of annual one-day conferences this year with the title 'Presenting the Birds through Print, Sound and Screen.' On 13th March 1999, at Christchurch College, Canterbury, a host of speakers, including Christopher Helm, Phil Chantler, Martin Woodcock, David Tomlinson, Stuart Winter, Dilys Breese and Stephen Moss, will tackle all the various aspects of 'presenting the birds'. Full details (conference fee £15.00) from John Cantelo, 17 Clyde Street, Canterbury CT1 1NA.

MODERN WILDLIFE PAINTING

This new book from Pica Press, featuring the work of 89 artists, beautifully portrays some of the best of the century's wildlife art. The author, Nicholas Hammond, will be signing copies at Titchwell Marsh RSPB reserve, Norfolk, on Sunday 14th February (tel: 01485 210779) and at Minsmere RSPB reserve, Suffolk, on Sunday 21st February (tel: 01728 648281). If you cannot make either date, you can telephone to reserve your signed copy.

An exhibition of paintings included in the book will be on display at the Wildlife Art Gallery in Lavenham, Suffolk, from 28th February. Some signed copies of the book will be available at the gallery, but please phone to reserve a copy (tel: 01787 248562).



LETTERS

RUDDY SHELDUCKS IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

Although there have been many letters and papers in recent ornithological publications on the status of the Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* in Great Britain, often with reference to the big influx into northwest Europe in 1892, all have missed what could be the most important factor governing the occurrence of the species in the region: the weather conditions in southern Europe during the breeding season.

Ruddy Shelducks often breed in areas which are very susceptible to drought, and the influx into northwest Europe in 1892 appears to have occurred as a direct result of this. In the book *British Birds* (4 vols., 1934), Archibald Thorburn stated: 'Throughout the exceptionally dry summer and autumn in Southern Europe in 1892 large numbers visited Great Britain and Ireland, when they were sometimes seen in flocks.' According to *The Handbook* (Witherby *et al.* 1940): 'Many occurred June to Sept. 1892, various parts Ireland, in Cumberland, Berwick, Sutherland, Morayshire, Lincs, Norfolk and Suffolk. Flocks ten to fifteen and even twenty in some places.' It is quite possible that recent influxes have also coincided with such weather conditions in southeast Europe, Asia or North Africa. (The breeding range of Ruddy Shelducks in southern Europe has contracted eastwards towards Asia, which may account for the smaller numbers recorded during recent influxes.)

Another important point, which may indicate genuine vagrancy, is the simultaneous arrival of birds in the United Kingdom over a broad front. A single female arrived on Stronsay, Orkney, on 5th August 1990, coinciding with a party of five seen flying over London on the same day. There is a neat parallel here. In October 1988, three Pied Wheatears *Oenanthe pleschanka* arrived almost simultaneously in Norfolk, North Yorkshire and Stronsay,

Orkney. (The breeding range of Pied Wheatear in southeast Europe is very similar to that of Ruddy Shelduck.)

Whilst I accept that the true picture of Ruddy Shelduck occurrences in northwest Europe will always be clouded by the problem of escapes and feral breeding populations (this was also accepted by Thorburn and others in the last century), it may well be that failure to breed because of drought conditions results in a considerable number of adults leaving the breeding areas early and heading northwestwards towards the United Kingdom. This would also account for the fact that most sightings here are of adults.

J. Holloway, Castle, Stronsay, Orkney

EDITORIAL COMMENT

A paper addressing these points will be published in *British Birds* shortly.

BRING BACK THE DALMATIAN PELICAN?

I cannot believe that Dr W. R. P. Bourne was serious when he suggested reintroduction to Britain of the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (*Brit. Birds* 92: 51).

Surely the species became extinct as a British bird, not because of extermination by Man, but because of climate change and, to a lesser extent, because of loss of habitat? That habitat has not been replaced, the climate is wrong, and there is simply nowhere for the Dalmatian Pelican to breed in modern-day Britain.

I, for one, would be totally against such a re-establishment scheme and would consider it an appalling waste of limited conservation resources. Let us concentrate on saving the Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, the Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* and the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*. The Dalmatian Pelican is no more a British bird than *Iguanodon* is a British reptile.

C. Davies, Dentons Green, St Helens, Merseyside

NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY BOB SCOTT AND WENDY DICKSON

GCT, partridges and Hen Harriers

The Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) is not a stranger to this column, and we frequently exhort the birdwatching community to take a little more interest in what it is doing and what it is saying. Two cases in point have reached us in recent weeks. The GCT has just launched what it describes as a 'radical' action plan to save the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, a species that has declined in the UK by some 78% in the last 25 years. The Grey Partridge was one of 116 species identified as in urgent need of assistance following the Government's signing of the Rio Convention on Biodiversity in 1992. Unfortunately, the action plan lacks a sponsor. The recovery mechanism is available, but do we just sit around and wait? The plan's objectives are straightforward: to halt the decline by 2005 and to increase the population to 150,000 pairs by 2010. We rather doubt that Government money will be available, but somewhere out there amongst the

shooting interests there should be the necessary funds.

Perhaps rather less easy to swallow is the GCT publication *Hen Harrier Translocation as a Conservation Tool in the United Kingdom – a feasibility study*. At first glance, it seems to provide an easy solution to the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* versus Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* problem: move the Hen Harriers from areas where they are not wanted into areas where they will be acceptable. There must be some question, however, over the long-term aspects. If grouse moors are to accept a certain level (albeit not a natural level) of Hen Harriers, what happens when all the new areas have a breeding population of harriers? Do we start a slaughter on the moors again? This is a conservation issue with no easy solution. We should all love to see Hen Harriers floating over countryside where they presently do not exist, but there is something to be said for seeing them arrive naturally as the result of a successfully expanding population – a case we have argued previously for species such as Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. We doubt if the grouse-moor owners would necessarily agree with us.

Wildlife Action Pack

It is impossible for a national conservation organisation such as the RSPB to become involved in every site of wildlife interest. It must rely upon its members and supporters to act on local issues. To this end, the Society has recently produced a 'Wildlife Action Pack' that is full of all the information you might need to take action to protect local

wildlife sites that you particularly value. The pack includes information sheets on how to assess the value of the site, how to involve councillors, MPs and the media, and all about different habitats and species ranging from birds to badgers and bats. There is even an information sheet on 'jargon busting'. This must be one of the most useful packages of information currently available. Copies are available free from Dept LFL, RSPB, ADMAIL 975, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2TN; tel: 01767 680551.

The ups and downs of the BBS

The BTO, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the RSPB have recently published the 1996-97 report of *The Breeding Bird Survey*, including changes in population levels back to 1994, when the survey started. With the passage of time, the records become more meaningful, and increasingly it will be possible to make a comparison with the *Common Birds Census* results. Until now, the CBC has been the only large-scale census that monitored changes in the breeding numbers of some of our commonest bird species. Statistically and scientifically it is a dangerous thing to

do, but it is fun to run the finger down the list of population changes between 1994 and 1997 and discover that 43 species have declined and 55 species have increased. There are 17 species with statistically significant declines, the largest decrease being a 49% decline in numbers of the Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*. By comparison, there are 30 species with statistically significant increases, the largest being a 112% rise in numbers of the Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*. It must be extremely satisfying to the organisers to see that the number of squares surveyed annually has risen steadily from 1,569 in 1994 to 2,169 in 1997.

To assist in future years, contact The Census Unit, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Hunting in France: petition

Under pressure from French hunting groups, the French Parliament has voted in a law (dated 3rd July 1998) imposing on the entire country a hunting season for migratory waterbirds from 14th July to 28th February. Such a period must be incompatible with the birds' biological requirements. These same hunting groups wish to see a modification of the European Directive on Wild Birds (1979), which forbids the hunting of migratory birds during their breeding season and during their migration towards their breeding grounds. This Directive is the cornerstone of so much national bird conservation

throughout Europe. Various organisations, which include France Nature Environnement (FNE), Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) and BirdLife International, are calling upon and petitioning the French Government to repeal the 3rd July 1998 law and to forbid the hunting of species whose conservation status in Europe is poor; and at the same time calling upon the European Parliament not to modify the Birds Directive. Copies of the petition for signature are available from LPO (UK), The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS40 8SN, tel: 01275-332980, or via the petition web site (<http://www.lapetition.com>). It is essential that as many people as possible sign this petition, which is due to be submitted to the European Parliament at the end of February 1999.

Peregrines in Brighton

The Sussex Ornithological Society has reported the results of a successful joint project with the RSPB to establish breeding Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* in

Brighton. For several years, Peregrines have lived around the West Pier and fed happily on the town's Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and feral Rock Doves *Columba livia*, but have lacked a nesting site. On 23rd March 1998, one was erected, and the first Peregrine egg was laid within ten days. Two young females fledged successfully at the end of June.

1999 Nightingale Survey

The BTO is organising a national census of Common Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* in 1999, the first since 1980. It is known that Common Nightingales have disappeared from many of their former haunts during the last 20 years or so, while numbers in other areas have remained stable or even increased. Volunteers are needed in all areas of the Common Nightingale's range, to visit sites known to hold the species in recent years. If you feel that you can help, please contact your BTO regional representative or Andy Wilson at the British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU; tel: 01842 750050.

New Year Honours

We are delighted that the latest New Year Honours List brought recognition to several deserving ornithologists and scientists. Derek Moore, until recently Director of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was created an OBE 'for services to nature conservation, particularly in Suffolk'. Professor Ian Newton, eminent Behaviour Notes Panel member, President-elect of the BOU and already a Fellow of the Royal Society, now adds OBE to his honours, in recognition of his 'services to Avian Research'. Dr J. R. Krebs, Chief Executive of the Natural Environment Research Council, has been created a Knight Bachelor 'for services to Behavioural Ecology'.

Wildlife crime

It never ceases to amaze us. Yes, we know that people collect eggs, take young falcons from the nest and trap finches to put in cages. The breadth of wildlife crime is unfortunately almost unbelievable. The latest edition of *Legal Eagle*, the RSPB's investigations newsletter, contains some staggering information. The lead story is of a 'falconer' caught on video and eventually prosecuted following a broadcast on BBC's *Crimewatch UK*. Good cloak-and-dagger stuff! Inside, however, are some dramatic cases. Stories of DNA and the revealing of the illegal sale of whales and claimed captive breeding of Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus*; a collection of over 1,000 eggs, including those of Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*; nine Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

eggs in a single collection; shooting on an RSPB reserve; a man facing 70 charges relating to trapping and caging wild birds; a taxidermy shop in London with a huge range of CITES-listed species; 800 Double-crested Cormorants *Phalacrocorax auritus* slaughtered in New York State; a £2,000 fine for grubbing out a medieval hedge; a prosecution for deliberately killing Brown Long-eared Bats *Plecotus auritus* on 'sticky traps'; and extractors illegally taking stone from protected limestone pavements and selling it at £100 per tonne. It appears that there is no end to wildlife crime. We hear rumours that egg-collectors are turning their attentions towards Britain's declining 'common' farmland species, and even Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* eggs in nestboxes are no longer safe.

Contact: RSPB Investigations Department, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Rare breeding birds

Observers with any outstanding information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1998 are requested to send full details now to the relevant county bird

recorder or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN).

News from France

Congratulations to the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO), whose membership has now passed the 28,000 mark and is fast approaching 30,000. Significant support for LPO is crucial for wildlife conservation in France. In the autumn of 1998, five Black Storks *Ciconia nigra*, fully protected in France, were shot whilst on their migration through the country. Two of these were young Czech birds carrying Argos satellite transmitters and whose movements were being followed as part of a school project in

Belgium and the Czech Republic.

Rather better news comes from the French Ministries of Agriculture and Environment in relation to the disposal of animal carcasses and the useful functions performed by vultures. So long as essential public-health precautions are taken into account, the waste products of abattoirs and livestock farms can now be disposed of via 'vulture restaurants'. This must be good news for Griffon *Gyps fulvus*, Egyptian *Neophron percnopterus* and Monk Vultures *Aegypius monachus*, and Lammergeiers *Gypaetus barbatus* in the Pyrenees, Massif Central and Alps. For more information concerning LPO(UK), contact Ken Hall, The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS40 8SN.

Funding Nature Conservation in Europe

Conservation costs money. We all know that. In fact, the conservation organisations are frequently asking us for funds to assist with their work and are always keen to demonstrate where the money goes. In many cases, we may wish to make the claim that governments, through one mechanism or another, should fund wildlife conservation. After all, wildlife is there for the benefit of all, just as much as defence, health or agriculture. But what does conservation cost? Over the years, various attempts have been made to calculate this for the different aspects of wildlife conservation. One of the easiest to calculate is the establishment and management of reserves or protected areas. A recent

publication from BirdLife International calculates that the management of protected areas will average out at some 80 Euros/ha/year [about £57].

Under a range of EU Directives, member states have a primary obligation to designate and conserve their most important wildlife sites. These sites will form a network known as Natura 2000. Total estimates for managing the Natura 2000 network range between 2.5 and 2.75 billion Euros each year. This sum does, however, exclude land-purchase costs, habitat re-creation costs and administering and monitoring the entire programme. So, where will all the money come from? BirdLife International has prepared over 16 bullet points for action that it is urging the European Commission, member states and the European Parliament to act upon.

Copies of *Funding Nature Conservation in Europe* are available from BirdLife International European Community Office, 22 rue de Toulouse, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium.

1998 records

If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1998 records. Please send your records to the appropriate County/Regional Recorder.

YOY 1998

A nine-day *WildWings* holiday in Poland, two pairs of *Swarovski* binoculars, three *Brasher Boot Company* birdwatching jackets, enough bird books from *Christopher Helm*, *Hamlyn*, *HarperCollins*, *PanMacmillan*, *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser* to fill a wheelbarrow, plus a free weekend for the senior winner at the

BTO's Annual Conference: these were the prizes gained by the latest trio of winners of the title Young Ornithologists of the Year. The award ceremony was introduced by Robert Gillmor and Tony Marr, two of the judges, representing the Society of Wildlife Artists and the British Ornithologists' Union, and the prizes were presented by Dr Tim Sharrock, *BB's* Managing Editor, and Dr Gerold Dobler of *Swarovski* (plate 21).



21. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR 1998. Left to right, Ben Phalan (senior winner), Tony Marr, Robert Gillmor, Dr Gerold Dobler, Anthony Price (junior winner) and Dr Tim Sharrock (*Peter Wilkinson*) (The intermediate winner, Jonathan Dean, was involved in exams and could not attend the ceremony.)

Red-breasted Geese

With a total population of some 60,000-70,000 individuals, the Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* is one of the World's most endangered species. Nesting on the tundra in northwest Siberia, the birds head south each autumn and virtually the entire population winters on the west coast of the Black Sea, in the Dobrudja region of Romania and Bulgaria. By early December, the largest numbers are in Romania, but as the winter progresses the birds move farther south,

particularly in times of severe weather, and by February the majority are likely to be found in Bulgaria. Both countries have protection schemes in place, and the Romanian Ornithological Society has recently published a small leaflet describing the life cycle of the goose. Financial assistance for the work should be sent to the Romanian Ornithological Society, Str. Gh. Dima 49/2, 3400 – Cluj, Romania. Another means of showing support is to join one of the growing number of winter tours that visit Romania and Bulgaria, specifically to see the Red-breasted Geese. In this way, it can be demonstrated just how important the rest of the World considers this species to be.



MONTHLY MARATHON

December's twig-perching passerine (*Brit. Birds* 91: 580, plate 168, repeated opposite as plate 23), photographed by senior Young Ornithologist of the Year, Ben Phalan, was named by competitors as Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (4%), Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (1%), Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* (4%), Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (3%), Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (3%), Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (15%), Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* (5%), Spotted Flycatcher *M. striata* (2%), Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (3%), Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (16%), Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (35%), Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* (1%), Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (2%) and Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* (6%).

The leading contender, Peter Lansdown, got this one right, and moves on to a sequence of seven consecutive correct answers; his nearest contenders are Dr P. J. Knight (Leeds) and Nick Littlewood (Barrow in Furness), who have both achieved a sequence of four. The identification is discussed below by Sunbird leader Steve Rooke.

Perhaps the first thing you notice about this individual is that there is really not too much to notice – in itself an important clue. We are obviously dealing with a fairly plain bird that shows a shortish, notched tail, two faint, narrow wing-bars, a hint of faint streaking on the mantle and what seems to be equally faint streaking on the underparts, or the flanks at least. This in itself would probably be enough to lead many observers to the conclusion that they had just flushed a female, or second-year male, Scarlet Rosefinch and indeed the photograph does convey a lot of the jizz of that species. You can just imagine that stocky head turning to reveal the characteristic stout bill and dark staring eye.

But for those without enough experience of the species to rely on jizz, the well-notched tail and general bulk should point you towards a finch of some kind and the lack of contrasting markings anywhere on the bird just about rules out any other species.

STEVE ROOKE

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



22. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 150. Eleventh stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species.

Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1999.



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BEST BIRD BOOKS OF THE YEAR

All books voted 'Best Bird Book of the Year 1983-98' (listed in full in *British Birds* Jan 1999) are available POST FREE. Please order here, giving title(s) and author(s), or on an additional sheet.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Alvaro Jamarillo & Peter Burke *New World Blackbirds – the Icterids* (Christopher Helm Publishers) 512pp; 39 colour plates, 103 colour maps, line drawings. £35.00

SPECIAL OFFERS

Ehrlich, Dobkin & Wheye <i>The Birdwatcher's Handbook</i> (OUP)	(was £8.95)	£5.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flegg & Hosking <i>Eric Hosking's Classic Birds</i> LIMITED EDITION (HarperCollins)	(usually £50.00)	£28.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roselaar <i>Songbirds of Turkey</i> (Pica Press)	(usually £24.00)	£17.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harrison, Allen, Underhill et al <i>The Atlas of Southern African Birds</i> (2 vols.)	(usually £120.00)	£96.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serie, Morel & Hartwig <i>Collins Field Guide to the Birds of West Africa</i> (HarperCollins)	(usually £19.99)	£15.99	<input type="checkbox"/>

NEW THIS MONTH

Higgins (ed.) <i>The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds</i> vol.4 Parrots to dollarbirds (OUP)	£135.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Howell & Webb <i>Where to Watch Birds in Mexico</i> (Helm)	Paperback £19.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jeyarajasingam & Pearson <i>A Field Guide to the Birds of West Malaysia and Singapore</i> (OUP)	Paperback £25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newman <i>Sappi Newman's Birds of Southern Africa</i> (Southern)	Hardback £55.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pemberton (ed.) <i>The Birdwatcher's Yearbook & Diary 1999</i> (Buckingham Press)	Paperback £19.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rowlands, Trueman, Olson, McCulloch & Brooke <i>BOU Checklist 16: The Birds of St Helena</i> (BOU)	Paperback £12.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Won <i>A Field Guide to the Birds of Korea</i> (Korean text but English names and distribution maps)	£23.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
	£41.00	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMING SOON – ORDER NOW

Clarke & Schmitt <i>Field Guide to the Raptors of the Western Palearctic</i> (OUP) MARCH	Paperback £25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hardback £55.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clements <i>A Guide to the Birds of Peru</i> (Ibis) LATE SUMMER 1999 Price tentative	£35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doughty, Day & Plant <i>Field Guide to the Birds of the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia</i> (Helm) JUNE	Paperback £17.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Garbutt <i>Mammals of Madagascar</i> (Pica Press) MARCH	£30.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hancock <i>Heron and Egrets of the World: a photographic guide</i> (Academic Press) MARCH	£24.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Harrison & Worfolk <i>Field Guide to the Birds of Sri Lanka</i> (OUP) MARCH	Paperback £29.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hardback £55.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Isler & Isler <i>Tanagers</i> (Helm) MAY	Paperback £29.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
König, Weick & Becking <i>Owls</i> (Pica Press) APRIL Price tentative	£35.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accompanying double CD (Pica Press) MAY	£24.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rebane <i>Where to Watch Birds in North and East Spain</i> (Helm) MAY	Paperback £14.99	<input type="checkbox"/>
Svensson, Mullarney & Zetterström <i>Birds of Britain & Europe</i> (HarperCollins) MAY	£25.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wells <i>The Birds of the Thai-Malay Peninsula</i> vol.1 Non-passerines (Academic Press) MARCH	£65.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zimmerman, Turner & Pearson <i>Field Guide to the Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania</i> (Helm) JUNE	Paperback £16.99	<input type="checkbox"/>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Europe & Western Palearctic		
Baker <i>Warblers of Europe, Asia and North Africa</i> (Helm)	£32.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Beaman & Madge <i>The Handbook of Bird Identification: Europe and the Western Palearctic</i> (Helm)	£65.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
British Birds <i>The British Birds List of Birds of the Western Palearctic</i>	£2.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cramp <i>Birds of the Western Palearctic</i> (OUP) volumes 1-7, 9 – £90 each volume 8 – £95		
□ vol.1 □ vol.2 □ vol.3 □ vol.4 □ vol.5 □ vol.6 □ vol.7 □ vol.8 □ vol.9		
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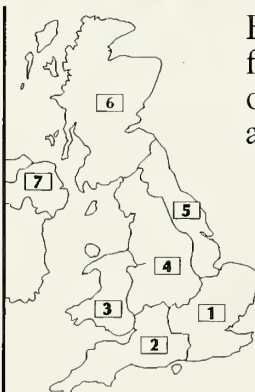
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23. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrurus*, Co. Wexford, June 1995 (Ben Phalan)

RARITIES COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENTS



At the AGM of the British Birds Rarities Committee, it was decided to remove two species from the list considered. These are White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and 'Kumlien's Gull' *Larus glaucooides kumlieni*. In addition, two species, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, are coming back on the list to be considered. The reasons for these decisions are discussed below.

White-tailed Eagle

- The RSPB tells us that, in the last few years, there have been at least 34 eagles fledged in Scotland which have not been wing-tagged and this number represents a fair proportion of the successful fledgings.
- Recent research from Norway has shown that immature White-tailed Eagles wander a lot farther than was originally thought. Scottish birds have been

recorded as far from the breeding areas as Glasgow and Shetland, with one even reaching Norway. This has led to the situation where individuals in Shetland, where genuine vagrants from the increasing populations in Scandinavia are likely to occur, are regarded as 'from the re-establishment scheme'. Similar birds in England and Wales do not suffer this reaction, even though we that know wing-tagged birds are capable of wandering much farther than this from their natal area.

- As the numbers of non-wing-tagged Scottish eagles have increased, the problem of determining the origins of many birds has also increased, to a point where the BBRC now considers it a fruitless exercise to attempt to differentiate genuine vagrants from re-established birds.
- White-tailed Eagle is an amazing bird to find and, undoubtedly, genuine vagrants do occur. We appreciate that this

decision may disappoint many birders, but we feel that this is an inevitable consequence of the success of the re-establishment scheme.

'Kumlien's Gull'

The BBRC feels that there are a number of problems with this form.

- Since the recent interest in the identification of this subspecies, it seems that Kumlien's is best considered a scarce winter visitor.
- The range of plumage variation is such that it is difficult to establish clear divisions between nominate Iceland Gull and Kumlien's Gull, particularly in first-year plumages.
- Whilst a number can be safely identified, this is not true for many, as we know that birds indistinguishable in the field from the nominate race both breed and winter in areas where only Kumlien's Gull is 'meant' to occur. In Britain, we are therefore limiting ourselves to identifying only a proportion of the extralimital visitors.
- Because of the problems of identification, the lack of clarity as to which birds are Kumlien's, the shifting nature of its taxonomic status and the change in status in Britain, which may represent a change in occurrence but is more likely to reflect a change in observer behaviour, we feel that the process of record assessment is not achieving anything scientifically.
- The BBRC wishes to encourage observers to continue to submit records of those individuals resembling Thayer's Gull *L. thayeri*, as these will help in the assessment of future claims of that species.

Savi's Warbler and Ferruginous Duck

It has always been the policy of the BBRC that the list of species it considers is not unchangeable. Species that have become more common are taken off the list, but species can also be readmitted if suitable

circumstances arise. The development of the scarce migrant database by Peter Fraser has allowed us to monitor fringe species in a more organised way.

There are established criteria for removal of species from the list. These are when a species has occurred in nine or all of the previous ten years and with a mean greater than 15 birds per year. Whether the species is removed from the rarity list also depends on whether we feel that identification criteria have been sufficiently well established amongst the county panels.

There is of course no reason why the reverse process should not happen, and consequently records of Savi's Warbler and Ferruginous Duck will be considered from 1st January 1999.

Savi's Warbler is becoming increasingly rare, and singing birds are no longer turning up at the one or two traditional localities in southern Britain. This pattern contrasts with the recent upsurge of spring records of River Warbler *L. fluviatilis*.

Ferruginous Duck has not been considered by the BBRC for over 25 years because of the perception that large numbers of feral birds might be occurring (in the manner of Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*). The database, however, has shown the species to be very uncommon, and this, combined with identification problems associated with hybrids, suggested that it would be a worthwhile exercise to determine the species' current status in Britain.

The importance of monitoring their occurrences in Britain is increased by the fact that both species are threatened in their normal ranges by habitat loss.

Please continue to send all records of rare birds to your local county recorder, who will forward them appropriately. Reports of singing Savi's Warbler may alternatively be sent to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, which is used to dealing confidentially with such records.

Colin Bradshaw,
9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



RECENT REPORTS

COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

This summary of unchecked reports covers 1st December 1998 to 11th January 1999. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Restellan (Co. Cork), adult up to 11th January. **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* Neil Macauley's Lough (Co. Down), from mid-December; Midleton (Co. Cork), from mid-December; North Slob (Co. Wexford), from mid-December. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Arenal Reservoir (Cornwall), female on 6th-8th January, and two females on 9th-10th January; Ardnave Loch (Strathclyde), 9th January. **Smew** *Mergellus albellus* Widespread influx including up to 39 Dungeness area (Kent); 15 Twyford gravel pits (Berkshire); 24 Wraybury gravel pits (Berkshire); 15 Amwell gravel pits (Hertfordshire); 18 Fen Drayton gravel pits (Cambridgeshire); 15 Rutland

Water (Leicestershire); 14 Chew Valley Lake (Somerset); 12 Earl's Barton (Northamptonshire). **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* Banagher (Co. Offaly), 18th December. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* The Cull (Co. Wexford), up to three in late December. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Kinsale (Co. Cork), 11th January. **Thayer's Gull** *Larus thayeri* Newport (Co. Mayo), 27th December to 3rd January. **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* Inverpolly Lodge (Highland), 7th December; Newport (Co. Mayo), 31st December; Kinsale (Co. Cork), probably same as Co. Mayo, 9th-10th January. **Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrhaptes paradoxus* Sanday (Orkney), 11th December. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* of black-throated race *atrogularis*, Woodlands Park, near Maidenhead (Berkshire), 31st December to 10th January. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Point of Ayr (Clwyd), 2nd-3rd December.



24. Male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of black-throated race *atrogularis*, Maidenhead, January 1999 (George Reszeter)



25. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Portland, Dorset, November 1998 (George Reszeter). Reported last month (*Brit. Birds* 92: 58)

RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Mishnish Lochs, Mull (Argyll), 15th June. **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Attenborough and Wollaton (Nottinghamshire), 29th June to 1st July; Rainham Marsh (Essex), 26th-27th August. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Chilton Trinity (Somerset), 3rd, 7th-8th April. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Holywell (Northumberland), 8th August; same, Benacre and other localities (Suffolk), 12th August to 12th September. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* St Agnes (Scilly), 21st

September to October. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Elmley (Kent), 17th-18th July. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Elmley and Oare Marshes (Kent), 4th July to at least 27th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Carr Vale (Derbyshire), 22nd August; Cuckmere Valley (East Sussex), 27th September to 1st October.

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Submissions should be in duplicate, typewritten, with double spacing and wide margins, and on one side of the paper only, preferably accompanied by a word-processed version on disk. Both IBM-compatible (PC) and Macintosh disks are acceptable, and most word-processing applications can be easily translated, so long as they are reasonably current. If you are not using an up-to-date, standard program, it is best to submit your paper or contribution in two versions on disk: one in the original word-processed format and one in a basic text format such as RTF (Rich Text Format). The approximate position of figures and tables should be clearly indicated on the hard copy of the text. Figures should be in black ink on good-quality tracing paper or white drawing paper; lettering should be inserted lightly in pencil; captions should be typed on a separate sheet. Photographs should be either 35mm transparencies or high-quality prints. Only transparencies will be considered for a front-cover image.

Papers should be concise and factual, taking full account of previous literature and avoiding repetition as much as possible. Opinions should be based on adequate evidence. Authors are encouraged to submit their work to other ornithologists for critical assessment and comment prior to submission. Such help received should be acknowledged in a separate section. For main papers, an abstract summarising the key results and conclusions should be included, but should not exceed 5% of the total length. Authors should carefully consult this issue for style of presentation, especially of references and tables.

English and scientific names and sequence of birds should follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997); or, for non-West Palearctic species, Monroe & Sibley (1993), *A World Checklist of Birds*. Names of plants should follow Dony *et al.* (1986), *English Names of Wild Flowers*. Names of mammals should follow Corbet & Harris (1991), *The Handbook of British Mammals*, 3rd edition. Topographical (plumage and structure) and ageing terminology should follow editorial recommendations (*Brit. Birds* 74: 239-242; 78: 419-427; 80: 502).

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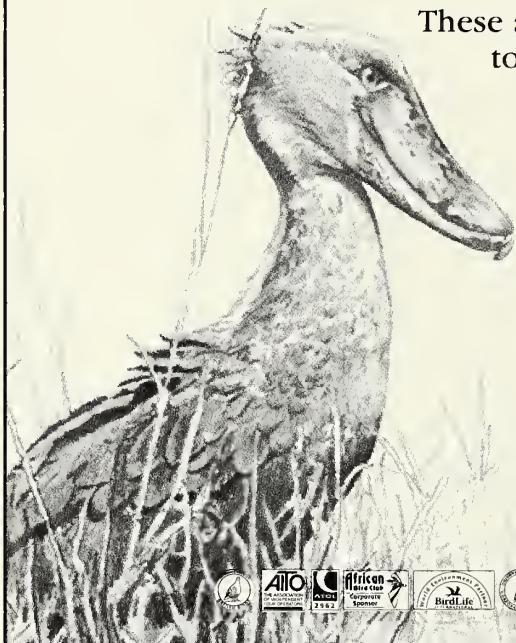
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CHRISTMAS PUZZLE

SPONSORED BY *Vinicola Hidalgo SA*

Andy, Brian and Cyn had one fantastic day in the field this autumn. Of the 15 *Phylloscopus* warblers that they had in view at the same time, eight had wing-bars and four had a distinct pale rump-patch.

At one point, Cyn observed that 'I've got three individuals of one species close to me.' Brian responded that 'There's definitely two of another species, too: one perched to my right and one flying in from my left.' Excitedly, Cyn whispered '... and one of those two recent splits by the BOURC – I can see two, one of each species, both on my left.' At this, Andy added '... and I've got a third: one of the commoner of those two species is in my scope.'

At the end of the day, Andy commented: 'I know that we've seen 11 of the 12 British species of *Phyllosc*, but I don't know which one we didn't see.' 'Nor do I,' said Brian. 'Me neither,' echoed Cyn.

'Do you realise,' said Andy, 'that only seven of those birds were of species that breed closer to Britain than the Urals?' Cyn then added: 'But four of them might have bred in Britain.'

1. Which was the most numerous species that day?
2. Which two species were next most numerous
3. In not more than 5 words, explain why none of the three birders knew which species they had not seen.

THE SOLUTION

The puzzle (on page ix in the December 1998 issue, text repeated here), contrived by Tim Sharrock and sponsored by Vinicola Hidalgo SA, asked three questions: (1) Which was the most numerous species?, (2) Which two species were next most numerous?, and (3) In not more than five words, explain why none of the three birders knew which species they had not seen. The answers could be deduced as follows:

- a. 15 birds; 11 species; 3 of one and 2 of two others, so 1 of each of the other eight.
- b. Five species have wing-bars, so 8 individuals must be 3+2+1+1+1 or 3+2+2+1+0.
- c. Three species have pale rump-patches, so 4 individuals must be 2+1+1 or 2+2+0 or 3+1+0.
- d. The two newly split Bonelli's species or the two newly split Yellow-browed species must be 2+1 or 3+1 or 3+2.
- e. Five species breed no closer than the Urals, so 8 individuals must be 3+2+2+1+0 or 3+2+1+1+1.
- f. So the 3 and one of the 2s must be distant-breeding warblers with wing-bars.
- g. Three species breed in Britain, so the 4

individuals must be 2+1+1.

- h. So the 3 is either Pallas's Leaf, Yellow-browed or Hume's, and three or four from Radde's, Dusky and the two Bonelli's are 1 (one perhaps being 0).
- i. So the newly split pair with 2 and 1 must be Yellow-browed/Hume's, and the commoner one (Yellow-browed) is the 2; so Pallas's Leaf is the 3; so one of the two Bonelli's species is 0.
- j. One of the other 2 is flying and is a British breeder, and the wing shape/wing-formula shows that it is Common Chiffchaff. In the field, Eastern Bonelli's and Western Bonelli's are separable only by call.

So, the three answers are: (1) Pallas's Leaf Warbler, (2) Yellow-browed Warbler and Common Chiffchaff, and (3) the Bonelli's warbler was silent.

The three winning entries, drawn on 15th January, were sent in by Mike Passat (Co. Durham), D. J. Scott (Leicestershire) and Rachel Warren (London), each of whom will receive a case of three bottles of La Gitana sherry from the sponsors, Vinicola Hidalgo SA.



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SUBSPECIES – MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE?

These are interesting and challenging times for the field ornithologist. Global climate change is upon us, and it comes on the back of intense and continuing habitat destruction worldwide. Birds have had over 100 million years to show that they can adapt to, and survive, environmental change – life cycles, ecological niches and migration strategies can all be modified by natural selection, but only time will tell how many types of bird will survive the next 1,000 (or even 100) years. Conservation action is imperative, but what exactly are we trying to conserve?

Take, for example, the races of Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* in Scotland, the Alps and the Pyrenees, geographically separated from the northern European populations since the Earth warmed at the end of the most recent Ice Age some 10,000 years ago. They survive as isolated remnants, testament to the colder climate of the past. What will be our response if Europe gets hotter in the next 100 years, threatening their existence? Would conservation effort be intensified if all distinctive isolated subspecies were to be recognised as full species? What, if anything, should be done to save isolated populations of a more widespread species, and do subspecies matter, anyway, if the species as a whole is not threatened?

Flicking through the Witherby *Handbook of British Birds* (1938-41), one sees a treatment of the diversity of birds which is very different from that to which we are now accustomed: recognised subspecies are given equal space and priority to species, and one can flit from wordy descriptions of, for example, British Redshank *Tringa totanus (britannica)* to Continental Redshank *T. t. totanus* to

Iceland Redshank *T. t. robusta* to Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* with little attention paid to specific boundaries. *The Handbook* is a celebration of the diversity of birds as they were seen at the time.

The last 50 years have seen a change in the way subspecies are treated. *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1977-94), for example, gives top priority to the species, and treats most subspecies with only brief descriptions. One reason for the marginalisation of the subspecies category is that it is very hard to define – naming of subspecies has historically been somewhat subjective and chancy, and an enormous rag-bag collection of both well-defined and poorly distinguished types of bird has been thrown into the ‘subspecies bin’, often purely for want of further study of their relationships one with another. While the different subspecies of some birds can be relatively easy to distinguish in the field, hence lending themselves to straight-forward treatment by birders and records committees (e.g. Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis/atrogularis*, *Brit. Birds* 92: 40-46), others are not. Faced with swarms of subspecies – many of which hybridise with each other, are not properly defined, and, often, are of doubtful validity anyway (such as the ‘British Redshank’ of Witherby) – there is a natural tendency for many birders to put the issue to one side.

Subspecies – whatever they are and however taxonomists treat them in the future – matter! From a biodiversity viewpoint, they are at the very least a symptom of the genetic variation which is inherent in all species of birds. Any one species is a genetically, and hence morphologically, heterogeneous collection

of individuals, living in heterogeneous and ever-changing environments. All genetic variation within species should be recognised as important, and worthy of conservation – it is the insurance of the species against environmental change, both in the present and in the future, the raw material upon which natural selection works and the basis of the capacity of the species to adapt and survive. From a biogeographical angle, subspecies also tell us much about the biology and history of the species concerned: about patterns of evolution and how selective pressures change across continents and between habitats.

Fortunately, as identification skills become more refined and concepts of what defines a species are challenged, difficult subspecies are very much back on the menu for those birders with the confidence to tackle them. Whatever species concept one uses, many birds which are currently defined as subspecies are certainly true species, and rightly

or wrongly this has been the spur for renewed study of variation in birds. Intraspecific diversity *should* be recognised and celebrated, whether we can tick it or not. Careful identification of subspecific or regional variation is one way to make a real contribution to ornithology, not least by revealing any changing patterns of migration and colonisation. Identification, however, is only half the story: birdwatchers in the field should use their advantage over museum-based taxonomists to discover and interpret the *behavioural* and *ecological* differences which set subspecies apart from each other, hence to contribute to taxonomic debate and formulate new conservation strategies.

Bird diversity is under threat. If the study of intraspecific variation is neglected in a changing world, we risk losing much of that diversity before its significance is fully realised.

MARTIN COLLINSON



26 & 27. Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*, Highland, July 1990 (Robin Chittenden). The Scottish Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus millaisi* is a subspecies which evolved in geographic isolation, marooned on the high tops of Britain by an ameliorating post-glacial climate. A commitment to the conservation of biodiversity requires that variation within the species is recognised as important and that, where possible, birds are not allowed to die out needlessly because they are 'only' a subspecies.

RARE BREEDING BIRDS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1996

MALCOLM OGILVIE AND THE RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL



Brooding female Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (Stuart Brocklehurst)

This, the twenty-fourth annual Report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, contains information on the breeding in 1996 of the species on the Panel's newly enlarged list, whether proven, probable or possible. As usual, the amount of detail included varies according to the perceived sensitivity of the species to intentional disturbance or to nest robbery. Thus, for the majority, the records are grouped into the Panel's ten regions (see below), though for some it is possible to list the actual counties. For a few species, only country totals are given.

THE PANEL

The current (March 1999) membership of the Panel is Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr H. Q. P. Crick, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interests and

needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies), with further contributions coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage in 1996 was not quite complete, though at least some records (or nil returns) were received from virtually every county and region. Information for some species remains patchy, however, and any known gaps are mentioned in the species accounts.

While bird-photographers may, in appropriate circumstances, be granted licences to photograph rare breeding birds in the UK, the RBBP does not wish to foster the expansion of this beyond the present level. Photographs of rare breeding birds are deliberately, therefore, not included with the Panel's annual reports.

THE PANEL'S LIST

This year saw the implementation of the Panel's decision to extend the list of species that it deals with, to take in all those on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The rationale behind this was described by Ogilvie (1997). Although this has meant that county and regional bird recorders were asked for even more information than before, the simplifying of the records requested for the commoner species has, it is hoped, saved them an equivalent amount of time in form-filling.

The commoner species are now mostly dealt with in a more abbreviated form than before, though still, it is hoped, giving informative summaries. The way in which data are presented is not fixed and can be expected to evolve in future years.

The Panel's list also now includes the scarcer introduced and naturalised species, and a separate report on these is being prepared for publication in *British Birds* later in the year.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 1996

The winter of 1995/96 was colder and snowier than normal and continued into the coldest March for about ten years, while early April was, if anything, even colder. This undoubtedly had an adverse effect on the earlier nesting species, such as Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, which were very late in starting in several areas. May was also colder than average, with several spells of wet weather, and, while June became hot and sunny over many parts of the country, for some species this was too late to improve their nesting success.

Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps auritus* had a disappointing season, with declines in the number of localities and the number of pairs. Only 17 young were known to have been reared to fledging, compared with 46 in 1995. Several early clutches of Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* were thought to have succumbed to the cold weather in May, though it is pleasing to be able to report a slight increase in the number

of booming males. Despite the off-putting spring weather, the long-expected first breeding of Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* took place, in Dorset, with nest-building or other related activity noted at a number of other sites. Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* would appear likely to be the next such colonist.

Most of the wildfowl did moderately well, though the number of Garganeys *Anas querquedula* was well down on last year, especially in Scotland. The decline in the number of Common Pochards *Aythya ferina* may reflect the change in reporting methods since last year, but there is some evidence that it is real, at least in some areas.

Reporting of birds of prey necessarily includes a degree of secrecy associated with their vulnerability to persecution. We appeal to all observers to pass their records to the Panel, where they are treated with the utmost confidentiality, so that a full picture of distribution and numbers does exist in at least one archive. Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* appeared to have had a good year, with 18 young fledged, the largest number ever recorded. Even so, the existence of further breeding pairs is known to the Panel and, if details were submitted, even with an instruction for non-publication, the size and health of the British breeding population would be much easier to assess.

Red Kites *Milvus milvus* continue to increase, both the wild population in Wales, although production was down thanks to the cold spring, and the re-established populations in England and Scotland. The other re-established species, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, also did well, with record numbers of pairs breeding and young reared. Both Marsh Circus *aeruginosus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* suffered declines compared with 1995, but Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* increased yet again, to top 100 breeding pairs, probably the first time that that number has bred in Scotland for 200 years. Production was good, too, despite the taking of some clutches by thieves, and the failure of 12 other nests, mostly as a result of bad weather.

It was a relatively modest year for Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix*, while Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* did no better than last year. It is pleasing, however, to report a further increase in the number of singing Corn Crakes *Crex crex*. The poor weather and the continued high predation by, especially, Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* kept the number of young Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* to under 200, despite a new record number of breeding pairs (592-654). Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* also suffered from nest failures and slightly lowered production in the cold spring, but they, too, achieved a new highest number of breeding pairs in recent years. Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* were very scarce and the one breeding attempt failed. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, on the other hand, had quite a good year, though at a reduced number of localities. The rarer northern waders just about held their own, while Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* followed the pattern of the southerly breeding species in having an increased number of breeding birds but reduced production of young.

Following several years of little change, a record number of pairs of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* bred. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* did slightly worse than last year in Britain, but this was more than offset by increases in the Republic of Ireland.

Hoopoes *Upupa epops* bred for the first time in Wales, and for the first time in Britain for ten years, but four singing Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* were all that was reported. Numbers of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* depend critically on surveys in a few city centres. The bomb in the centre of Manchester prevented that area being checked, while observations in both London and Birmingham were incomplete.

The first full survey of Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* revealed a total of 519-574 singing males, about 25% up on the numbers reported to the Panel in 1995 and showing the value of periodic detailed

censuses. Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* failed to breed for the second year running, and Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* showed a further decline, back to the levels in the late 1980s. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* continue to struggle, not helped by their obvious susceptibility to poor spring weather, both cold and wet. A pair of breeding Serins *Serinus serinus* was unexpected. Numbers of Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* were down, but productivity was quite good.

CONSERVATION USES OF PANEL DATA

It is the policy of the Panel to make data available for conservation uses where this is compatible with the constraints of confidentiality. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for reviews of Special Protection Areas), national data sets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys. Panel data have also played a key role in reviews of birds of conservation concern and national population estimates, together with the development of recovery plans for certain species.

PUBLICATIONS

The bibliography at the end of this report gives details of published results of surveys into the numbers and distribution of several Panel species.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of all the many county, regional and local recorders throughout the United Kingdom. Completing the forms is just one more burden put upon their willing shoulders, and it is greatly appreciated.

The following specialist contributors are also deserving of thanks: Jake Allsopp and the Golden Oriole Group, Colin Croke, Peter E. Davis, Roy Dennis, Dr Andy Evans, Dr Ian Evans, Dr Rhys Green, Bob Image, Steve Petty and Dr Ron Summers.

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We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all the very many individuals whose fieldwork produced the observations which make up this report.

KEY TO GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Note that recent further reorganisation of local government throughout Britain has made some of the names below obsolete. Exactly as happened after the last major reorganisation in 1974, however, some English county and area bird societies have changed their recording areas and others have not. So, without defining the precise boundaries of the 'counties' given below, these are, so far as possible, the names used by the local recorders who sent the Panel their information.

For Wales and for Scotland, it has been decided, again so far as possible, to use the names of the recording areas included in the respective annual bird reports of those two countries. Each publishes a map showing the names and boundaries, that for Wales being based on the Watsonian vice-counties, that for Scotland on the local bird report areas.

ENGLAND, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire.

ENGLAND, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, London & Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West).

ENGLAND, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Derbyshire,

Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire.

ENGLAND, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West).

WALES The Watsonian vice-counties of Anglesey (Môn), Brecon (Brycheiniog), Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin), Caernarfon, Ceredigion, Denbigh (Dinbych), Flint (Fflint), Glamorgan (Morgannwg), Gwent, Meirionnydd, Montgomery (Trefaldwyn), Pembroke (Penfro), Radnor (Maesdyfed).

SCOTLAND, S The local bird-recording areas of Dumfries & Galloway, Borders, Lothian, Ayrshire, Clyde (comprising the former Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire), Clyde Islands (Arran, the Cumbraes, Bute).

SCOTLAND, MID The local bird-recording areas of Angus & Dundee, Fife, Forth (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling), Perth & Kinross, Northeast Scotland (Aberdeenshire), Moray & Nairn.

SCOTLAND, N & W The local bird-recording areas of Argyll & Bute (less the island of Bute), Caithness, Highland (Badenoch & Strathspey, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland), Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides.

NORTHERN IRELAND Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed (pairs)' and 'Possible/probable (pairs)' mean 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding', respectively.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*

Three surveys carried out. Other, more casual, breeding observations not listed.

SCOTLAND, N & W

SHETLAND The 58 successful pairs located in Shetland Ringing Group study area had a ratio of one-chick to two-chick broods of 1 : 0.6, close to the long-term average.

ORKNEY Of 110 pairs on Mainland and Hoy, 97

probably bred, and 42 young were reared from 93 proved breeding attempts, with below-average production of 0.43 per pair.

ARGYLL Up to 34 pairs located (incomplete survey), but only six of 14 known to have bred were successful.

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The Shetland study, carried out by the local ringing group, was begun in 1979. The number of successful pairs fluctuates mainly between 40 and 65. The total British breeding population was estimated at 935 pairs in 1994 (Gibbons *et al.* 1997).

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*

A total of 120 sites was monitored by the RSPB, of which 96 were occupied, fledging 47 young, mean production per breeding pair 0.49. Mean production for raft nests was 0.68 young/pair and for natural nests 0.41. The following detailed information is included in this total.

SCOTLAND, N & W

HIGHLAND Total of 83 sites monitored, 73 of which were occupied by breeding pairs and a total of 38 young fledged, with about-average production of 0.52 young per breeding pair. ARGYLL Of six breeding pairs, four reared a total of five young; up to four pairs did not breed.

SCOTLAND, S

CLYDE Three pairs at two sites, but only one, unsuccessful, breeding attempt. ELSEWHERE Singles at three sites.

SCOTLAND, MID

PERTH & KINROSS Five pairs, of which one known to have been successful. FORTH Of four pairs at three sites, two nested, both failed.

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The research and monitoring carried out by the RSPB has conclusively shown the value of rafts in increasing breeding success. The most recent national survey (1994) showed a total British population of 155-189 pairs (RSPB unpublished data).

PIED-BILLED GREBE *Podilymbus podiceps*

No breeding records.

Although there were two records from Cornwall at the end of the year (*Brit. Birds* 90: 457), one of which was found dead, there were no records from the 1994 breeding site at Stithians Reservoir.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena*

Eight localities in six counties: one displaying pair, one possible pair and one single displaying adult.

ENGLAND, E Four localities: (1) one from 6th January to 7th September, with second from 3rd February to 31st March; (2) one in summer plumage, 16th April, calling and displaying; (3) usual adult, 31st March to 1st September; (4) one, 24th February to 30th March.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality: single from

January to at least 5th May.

ENGLAND, N One locality: adult on 25th May.

SCOTLAND, S One locality: usual pair summered with some display and platform-building, but no proof of breeding.

SCOTLAND, MID One locality: adult on 16th June.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	5	10	8	6	5	3	9	7	10	6	8
No. individuals	5	9	12	9	3	4	12	7	13	10	10
No. pairs	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	0	1	4	2

Once again, the southern Scotland birds demonstrated that they were indeed a pair, but got no further than platform-building. Elsewhere, the increased activity shown last year was reduced to lower, more usual, levels.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*

24 localities: 49-55 pairs breeding.

SCOTLAND, MID AND N & W 24 localities: just 17 young to fledging; also six unmated birds.
(1)-(24) total of 49 pairs bred producing

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	43	39	22	39	36	31	34	33	32	31	24
Confirmed (pairs)	68	33	31	70	74	61	72	73	51	58	49
Possible/probable (pairs)	19	6	6	8	12	13	5	4	8	7	6
Max. total pairs	87	39	37	78	86	74	77	77	59	65	55

After last year's slight increase, a disappointing decline and particularly poor production, only 17 young known to have fledged, compared with 46 in 1995. The young reared per pair was only 0.35, much lower than the long-term average of 0.62. The only bright note was the first proved breeding for many years in Caithness (two pairs, one of which reared three young). The Panel is grateful to the North of Scotland Regional Office of the RSPB for information on numbers and breeding performance.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

34 localities in 19 counties: minimum 23-57 pairs breeding, fledging at least 14 young.

ENGLAND, SW Three localities: 0-6 pairs.

AVON One locality: single in summer plumage.

HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair in April-May where four pairs bred in 1995; two other birds; no sign of breeding.

WILTSHIRE One locality: five adults in breeding plumage including pair displaying.

ENGLAND, SE One locality: 0-1 pair.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: adult and immature seen at past nesting locality from 31st July to late August; no proof of breeding at this site.

ENGLAND, E One locality: 0-1 pair.

NORFOLK One locality: single in suitable habitat.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Ten localities: 0-10 pairs.

LEICESTERSHIRE Five localities: pair and five singles, all adults in summer plumage.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: two singles. WARWICKSHIRE Two localities: four adults in breeding plumage. WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: pair.

ENGLAND, N Eight localities: 15-19 pairs.

CHESHIRE Two localities: three pairs bred, plus one pair. GREATER MANCHESTER

Three localities: three pairs bred, fledging two young; three pairs probably bred but failed.

NORTHUMBERLAND Three localities: nine pairs bred, fledging seven young, plus three other pairs.

WALES One locality: 0-1 pair.

GWENT One locality: single in summer plumage.

SCOTLAND, S Two localities: 2-3 pairs.

BORDERS Two localities: pair bred and fledged two young; two singles.

SCOTLAND, MID Seven localities: 6-12 pairs.

ABERDEENSHIRE Two localities: two pairs, did not breed. ANGUS & DUNDEE One locality: six pairs bred, fledging two young. FIFE Two localities: two pairs, did not breed. PERTH & KINROSS Two localities: two pairs, did not breed.

N IRELAND One locality: 0-1 pair.

ANTRIM/LONDONDERRY One locality: single in summer plumage (also present in 1995).

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	15	19	22	19	19	25	29	31	32	30	32
Confirmed (pairs)	11	27	15	25	21	19	26	24	27	30	20
Possible/probable (pairs)	22	12	20	15	16	34	34	26	54	47	33
Max. total pairs	33	39	35	40	37	53	60	50	81	77	53

A relatively poor total, though there were some gaps in coverage, notably in eastern England.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophris*

There was no report of the regular Hermaness bird this year, last seen in July 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 485).

GREAT BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

Ten localities with 22 booming males; at least eight young fledged from minimum of eight nests known to have been active. Also seen at six other sites.

ENGLAND, SW Two localities: (1) booming male, possibility of breeding; (2) single seen in March in suitable habitat.
ENGLAND, SE Three localities: (1) presumed pair in early April; (2) single on three dates in March and early June; (3) single in late April.
ENGLAND, E Nine localities: (1) six booming

males, two nests; (2) four booming males, one nest; (3)-(8) single booming males, nests at two sites; (9) adult present, not booming or breeding.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality: adult (present since June 1995) last seen mid May.
ENGLAND, N One locality: five booming males, three nests, at least five young fledged.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. booming localities	12	17	14	14	12	13	14	13	16	13	10
Confirmed nests	0	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	11	8
Booming males	23	22	30	30	20	19	19	17	20	20	22

Not a good season in terms of the number of sites where breeding took place, or for breeding success, with most first clutches in eastern England thought to have been deserted or to have failed around hatching as a result of the exceptionally cold weather during May. On the other hand, there was a small, but nevertheless encouraging, increase in the number of booming males. The Panel is grateful to the RSPB for supplying many of these data.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

24 localities; at least one pair bred and seven other pairs may have done so.

ENGLAND, SW At least 23 localities.
CORNWALL A total of 31 birds present through summer at eight localities, with breeding activity noted at three, including nest-building and apparent incubation, though without success.
DEVON A total of 51 birds at 13 localities in May and 42 birds at ten localities in June. One occupied nest at one site, outcome unknown.
DORSET Pair raised three young at Brownsea

Island, Poole Harbour.
HAMPSHIRE Adult with recently fledged young on 3rd June, origin unknown, but indication of perhaps two other pairs in county.
WALES One locality.
PEMBROKE Six birds seen displaying at heronry in March and two pairs thought to have built nests and one may have incubated eggs, but no young seen.

The first breeding of this species in Britain duly took place (Lock & Cook 1998), as had been well forecast. Although successful breeding was known to have taken place only at one locality, breeding attempts were probable at at least six more. Little Egrets were present in several other counties during the summer months, but only in those listed above did any breeding activity take place.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

At least 16 localities; at least 30-35 birds involved.

ENGLAND, E Present during the summer months at at least 15 different localities, though movement makes it difficult to determine precisely how many birds were involved. The largest number at any one locality was the peak count of 19 at Minsmere, Suffolk, in July. There were groups of up to

eight in Norfolk.
ENGLAND, N CHESHIRE Pair (including one ringed at Dutch colony) attempted breeding, Frodsham Marsh, with display and nest-building observed in May and June; up to three other individuals also present and occasionally nest-building.

It seems likely, from the increasing numbers summering and the observed activity in Cheshire, that breeding will take place before long.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*

Five localities: two pairs bred successfully, two others failed.

SCOTLAND, MID One locality: two pairs bred, but both nests flooded and eggs destroyed.

SCOTLAND, N & W Four localities: (1) pair bred and fledged three young; (2) pair

bred, seen with three half-grown young in July at locality where failed breeding attempt in 1995; (3) pair held territory; (4) pair summered.

Two apparently wild pairs bred successfully, while the pairs derived from captive stock failed. There were no reports from England this year.

BLACK DUCK *Anas rubripes*

One locality: one bird.

ENGLAND, SW One locality: one male.

SCILLY The male, which had been present on

Tresco since 1st April 1994, stayed throughout 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462).

In 1995, this male was seen to be paired to a female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, but in 1996 he remained solitary.

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope*

Breeding reports were received as follows:

ENGLAND, SE ESSEX Four pairs at three localities, of which two certainly bred. **HERTFORDSHIRE** Singles summering at three localities.

ENGLAND, E CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two pairs bred at one locality, six pairs present at four other localities. **SUFFOLK** Four birds summered at one locality and singles at two more.

ENGLAND, N NORTHUMBERLAND Six pairs bred at one locality (23 young seen) and single pairs at two more.

SCOTLAND, S DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Four pairs at one locality in April, one pair in June, no young seen. **BORDERS** Breeding at five localities, one brood seen. **CLYDE** Bred at

one locality.

SCOTLAND, MID ANGUS & DUNDEE 12 pairs at five localities, four broods seen. **FIFE** Pair bred at one locality, seven adults at second locality in June. **GRAMPIAN** Two pairs bred, of four present at one locality; one out of five at a second; pair bred at third. **MORAY & NAIRN** Two pairs at two localities, one brood seen.

SCOTLAND, N & W ARGYLL Two pairs bred at one locality, two pairs at second. **CAITHNESS** Bred at two localities. **HIGHLAND** 28 pairs at one locality. **ORKNEY** 12 pairs bred at six localities, pairs at three more. **SHETLAND** Bred at four or five localities. **WESTERN ISLES** Two broods seen at one locality.

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The information presented above, referring to about 120-130 pairs, relates to a population estimated at 300-500 pairs (*The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991*). With the great majority of those in remote areas of north and west Scotland, the value of having this as a Panel species will be in monitoring the status and distribution away from this core area.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

Breeding reports were received as follows:

ENGLAND, SW HAMPSHIRE 22 pairs proved to breed and 13 pairs probably bred. **SUSSEX** Three pairs bred at one locality and one at a second. **WILTSHIRE** Three pairs bred at one locality, pair at second.

ENGLAND, SE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Three pairs bred at one locality and one at a second. **ESSEX** Six pairs proved to breed and 37 pairs probably bred, at 17 localities. **HERTFORDSHIRE** 46 pairs bred (33 at one locality where 199 young), plus ten females. **KENT** 23 pairs proved to breed, six pairs probably bred, plus four pairs. **MIDDLESEX** Four pairs bred, at three localities.

ENGLAND, E CAMBRIDGESHIRE 57 pairs proved to breed, 108 pairs probably bred, plus 13

pairs. **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE** At least eight pairs bred, at seven localities. **SUFFOLK** 22 pairs reported from four localities.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL DERBYSHIRE Nine pairs proved to breed and two pairs probably bred. **WARWICKSHIRE** About 17 pairs reported, no broods seen. **WORCESTERSHIRE** Three pairs bred, at three localities.

ENGLAND, N CHESHIRE 24 pairs bred at one locality. **CLEVELAND** Two pairs bred, at two localities. **GREATER MANCHESTER** Pair bred. **LANCASHIRE & MERSEYSIDE** At least 11 pairs bred, at four localities.

WALES ANGLESEY At least one pair bred. **CARMARTHEN** Seven birds at one locality in June.

SCOTLAND, S BORDERS Pair possibly bred.

CLYDE 11 pairs bred, at three localities. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Two pairs, at two localities. LOTHIAN Pair bred (first since 1961). SCOTLAND, MID ANGUS & DUNDEE 17 pairs, at four localities (12 pairs and 48 young at one).

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. Although incomplete, with several counties not submitting records or estimates, the total reported above, of about 460-470 pairs, is a reasonable proportion of the estimated British breeding population of about 770 pairs (*The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991*), and the Panel should be able to monitor its spread north and west from its original stronghold in East Anglia.

NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

33 localities: 8-53 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW One locality: 0-1 pair.
SOMERSET One locality: pair in suitable habitat, no evidence of breeding.
ENGLAND, SE Five localities: 0-7 pairs.
ESSEX One locality: pair probably bred. KENT Three localities: four pairs, and a single. SUSSEX One locality: pair.
ENGLAND, E Four localities: 0-6 pairs.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: four pairs, and a male, no evidence of breeding. SUFFOLK One locality: pair possibly bred.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality: 0-1 pair.
LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair until mid May, female to early June.
ENGLAND, N Two localities: 1-4 pairs.
CHESHIRE Two localities: pair bred, plus three pairs.

FIFE Pair bred. PERTH & KINROSS Pair at one locality.
SCOTLAND, N & W ARGYLL Pair bred. HIGHLAND Pair bred. ORKNEY Six pairs (three broods seen), at two localities.

WALES One locality: 0-2 pairs.
PEMBROKESHIRE One locality: two pairs probably bred, but no young seen.
SCOTLAND, S Two localities: 0-2 pairs.
DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: pair, no evidence of breeding. LOTHIAN One locality: male in June.
SCOTLAND, MID One locality: 0-1 pair.
ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: pair in June.
SCOTLAND, N & W 16 localities: 7-29 pairs.
ARGYLL Five localities: two pairs bred, three further pairs present. INVERNESS One locality: two pairs bred, third pair present. ORKNEY Nine localities: three pairs bred, eight pairs probably bred, two other pairs and six males. SHETLAND One locality: two pairs, no evidence of breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	14	16	20	16	20	28	23	23	49	25	33
Confirmed (pairs)	6	7	14	11	9	4	13	4	20	11	8
Possible/probable (pairs)	12	14	15	28	27	39	35	43	56	34	45
Max. total pairs	18	21	29	38	36	43	48	47	76	45	53

Number of pairs and the number of localities are slightly up on last year, but note the effect of the full survey of Orkney in 1994, when 16 pairs and 11 singles were found.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

60 localities: 15-78 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW Five localities: 1-10 pairs.
AVON One locality: male in May. CORNWALL Two localities: (1) male in May/June and female/immature in August; (2) three juveniles from 22nd July into August, perhaps locally bred. DEVON All birds seen, including in May, thought to be migrants. DORSET One locality: pair displaying in May. SOMERSET One locality: pair bred, five further pairs present.
ENGLAND, SE 13 localities: 4-14 pairs.
HERTFORDSHIRE Four localities: three pairs and a single in May and early June. KENT Four localities: pair bred, two other pairs and a single. SUSSEX Five localities: three pairs bred, two other pairs and a female.
ENGLAND, E 27 localities: 8-35 pairs.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: seven

pairs bred, two successfully, one pair probably bred. HUNTINGDONSHIRE Four localities: three pairs and two males. NORFOLK 12 localities: pair bred, pairs or singles at ten other localities, up to six birds at one. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Four localities: four pairs. SUFFOLK Four localities: four males.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality: 0-1 pair.
LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair.
ENGLAND, N Two localities: 1-3 pairs.
CHESHIRE One locality: pair LANCASHIRE One locality: pair bred, second pair possibly bred.
WALES One locality: 0-1 pair.
ANGLESEY One locality: pair, no evidence of breeding.
SCOTLAND, S Three localities: 0-4 pairs.
CLYDE One locality: pair and two males in May,

female summered and may have bred unsuccessfully. LOTHIAN Two localities: (1) pair in May; (2) 18 birds, perhaps two family parties, on 5th August, in which case indicating successful breeding somewhere else in Scotland.

SCOTLAND, MID Three localities: 1-4 pairs.

ANGUS & DUNDEE One locality: pair bred, plus one other pair. **ABERDEENSHIRE** One

locality: pair in June, male into July. **PERTH & KINROSS** One locality: male in May and June.

SCOTLAND, N & W Five localities: 0-6 pairs.

ARGYLL Three localities: pair possibly bred, two females at second site, and one male at a third. **HIGHLAND** One locality: pair in May and June, no evidence of breeding. **ORKNEY** One locality: male in May and June, breeding suspected.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	42	36	37	81	87	90	90	73	65	80	60
Confirmed (pairs)	8	8	11	18	14	12	16	14	13	9	15
Possible/probable (pairs)	47	37	40	80	97	82	144	149	98	108	63
Max. total pairs	55	45	51	98	111	94	160	163	111	117	78

The maximum total pairs and the number of localities were the lowest since 1988, although confirmed breeding pairs were well up. This increase in confirmed breeding numbers was, however, largely influenced by the one site in Cambridgeshire.

COMMON POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

98 or more localities or areas: 269-369 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW Eight localities: 11-14 pairs.

AVON One locality: two pairs bred.

CORNWALL One locality: single summered.

HAMPSHIRE Three localities: seven pairs bred.

SOMERSET Three localities: two pairs bred, two pairs probably bred.

ENGLAND, SE 17 or more localities: 111-155 pairs.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: five pairs bred.

ESSEX 29 pairs bred, 40 pairs probably bred.

MIDDLESEX & INNER LONDON Eight localities: 27 pairs bred.

HERTFORDSHIRE Three localities: three pairs bred.

KENT 45 pairs bred, two other pairs present.

SURREY Three localities: two pairs bred, one other pair.

SUSSEX One locality: pair probably bred.

ENGLAND, E 25 localities: 71-82 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: three pairs bred, one other pair.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: six pairs bred.

NORFOLK Nine localities: 60 pairs bred (broods seen), no count of other pairs.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Seven localities: up to seven pairs.

SUFFOLK Five localities: two pairs bred, three other pairs.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Ten or more localities: 2-36 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE Ten pairs, no evidence of breeding.

LEICESTERSHIRE Five localities: up to six pairs and seven males.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

WARWICKSHIRE Pair bred,

pair probably bred, and six other pairs.

WORCESTERSHIRE Three localities: pair and two singles summered.

WEST MIDLANDS One locality: pair summered.

ENGLAND, N 15 localities: 28-31 pairs.

CHESHIRE Two localities: two pairs bred, plus two pairs.

CLEVELAND One locality: three pairs bred.

CUMBRIA One locality: pair bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: pair bred, pair probably bred.

LANCASHIRE Four localities: 13 pairs bred.

NORTHUMBERLAND Five localities: at least eight pairs bred.

WALES Five localities: 9-11 pairs.

ANGLESEY Two localities: eight pairs bred.

GLAMORGAN One locality: pair bred.

ELSEWHERE Two localities: pair, and female.

SCOTLAND, S Nine localities: 12-14 pairs.

BORDERS Seven localities: 12 pairs bred.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: male summered.

LOTHIAN One locality: pair in May.

SCOTLAND, MID Seven localities: 9-10 pairs.

ANGUS & DUNDEE Two localities: three pairs bred.

FIFE Two localities: two pairs bred at each.

GRAMPIAN One locality: pair in May.

PERTH & KINROSS Two localities: two pairs bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: pair.

ORKNEY One locality: pair bred.

N IRELAND One area: 15 pairs.

Lough Neagh basin: 15 broods seen.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161	145	117	158	142	98+
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284	266	237	347	309	269
Possible/probable (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144	292	179	291	185	100
Max. total pairs	185	174	347	336	293	428	558	416	638	494	369

The new method of reporting this less-rare species means that, for counties where it is most common, the number of localities is no longer requested and there is less emphasis on summering singles which would formerly have gone in the 'Possible/probable' total. The reduction in the total of confirmed pairs does, however, seem genuine, with a number of counties reporting reduced numbers.

GREATER SCAUP *Aythya marila*

Eight localities: ten single males.

SCOTLAND, MID One locality: male from 4th May to 20th June. on 23rd May; (2)-(7) single males in May or June, no evidence of breeding.

SCOTLAND, N Seven localities: (1) three males

No females were seen this year, and most if not all of these summering males are probably of little significance in the context of possible breeding.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

Ten localities: 11-43 pairs.

SCOTLAND, MID PERTH & KINROSS Four localities: up to nine pairs seen, one brood. ten broods.

SCOTLAND, N & W ARGYLL Two localities: 13 pairs. N IRELAND FERMANAGH One locality: four males, no proof of breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	35	15	36	7	9	14	32	38	47	61	10
Confirmed (pairs)	8	29	14	8	6	9	9	16	5	n.c.	11
Possible/probable (pairs)	92	33	76	32	23	21	62	72	79	76-89	32
Max. total pairs	100	62	90	40	29	30	71	88	84	89	43

After the full survey in 1995 (Underhill *et al.* 1998), no systematic counts were made this year of the main breeding area in the Flow Country.

COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding occurs predominantly in one extensive nestbox scheme in Scotland, for which only sample data are available, so there is no longer an estimate of the total number of breeding pairs. Increasing numbers are summering elsewhere, with breeding proved at three other Scottish sites, plus breeding by a released/escaped pair in England.

ENGLAND, E One locality.

NORFOLK One locality: female summered.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Seven localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: adult female in July.

LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) female to 25th May; (2) five birds until 19th May, none in June, two throughout July and August; (3) male until 2nd May. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Three localities: (1) female summered; (2)(3) singles in June.

ENGLAND, N Two localities.

LANCASHIRE One locality: released pair bred, but no young reared. NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female on 10th June in suitable habitat.

WALES One locality.

ANGLESEY One locality: female on 19th May.

SCOTLAND, S 11 localities.

Summering birds in AYRSHIRE, BORDERS, CLYDE (8) and DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY.

SCOTLAND, MID Seven localities.

MORAY & NAIRN One locality: pair bred.

TAYSIDE Five localities: (1) two broods, up to five males seen together; (2)-(4) pairs or singles in May-June, but no breeding evidence.

SCOTLAND, N & W Two localities.

HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) RSPB Abernethy Reserve nestboxes: 21 pairs bred, 19 nests successful, 138 young fledged (7.3 per successful nest); two or three pairs nested in natural sites; (2) RSPB Insh Marshes Reserve nestboxes: 29 pairs bred, 18 nests successful, 111 young fledged (6.2 per successful nest). An estimated 25 additional pairs are thought to have bred in Badenoch and Strathspey area.

The results from Highland Region refer to a sample only of the many boxes available to the species. Elsewhere, successful breeding continued in Tayside, but there was no evidence of breeding farther south in Scotland.

EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

27 localities in 11 counties: 14-34 pairs breeding; minimum of 18 young reared.

GREAT BRITAIN 27 localities: (1) two pairs, one raised one young; (2) pair raised two young, third adult present; (3)-(6) single pairs raised two young; (7)-(13) single pairs each raised one young; (14) pair bred, but apparently failed; (15) pair and single present

at regular site, but no evidence of breeding; (16)-(18) single pairs in breeding season; (19) up to five birds over wide area, relationships unknown; (20)-(25) singles in suitable habitat; (26)-(27) singles on single dates only, perhaps migrants.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	2	3	2	8	6	9	9	14
Max. total pairs	6	7	10	20	19	22	26	27	28	30	34

The population continues to creep up, while the minimum of 18 young reared is the largest number recorded. The above information is incomplete, with no reports received from two known breeding areas, and the Panel appeals to all observers to submit their records for safekeeping and to enable the size of the British population to be assessed more accurately.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

130 wild pairs reared 119 young, and at least 54 pairs from released stock reared 119 young.

WALES 130 pairs were proved to breed, of which 80 were successful, rearing 119 young. Although all three totals are new record highest, they were all only very slightly up on 1995, despite a greater increase in the total number of pairs. Cold winter weather may have reduced available prey and prevented more birds coming into breeding condition. Poor weather around hatching was probably responsible for brood reductions and some total nest

failures. In addition, there were a further 31 non-breeding pairs, while 122 unmated individuals were identified during the spring. The total population was estimated as at least 444 birds in April and 556 in August, an increase of 42 since August 1995. (The Panel's thanks go to Peter Davis for his detailed report. His work is funded by the RSPB and the Welsh Office 'Kite Country Initiative', with additional support from the Countryside Council for Wales.)

WALES	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Total pairs	58	59	68	71	84	92	101	115	138	146	161
Breeding pairs	40	44	49	54	65	76	84	104	111	127	130
Successful pairs	23	27	27	33	47	41	60	61	70	79	80
Young reared	29	39	38	49	73	62	96	82	99	117	119
Young/successful pair	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.5

The re-established breeding populations in England and Scotland continue to increase, and the Panel is grateful to Ian Evans (JNCC) and Lorcan O'Toole (RSPB) for the following information.

ENGLAND Not all nests were located, but at least 37 pairs bred, rearing 80 young. Pairs have now moved away from the original release site and are nesting in other counties

in southern England. In addition, a further 16 birds were released at a new site in the East Midlands, where 11 were released in 1995.

ENGLAND	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Total pairs	2	7	12	22	26	n.c.
Breeding pairs	2	4	9	20	24	37+
Successful pairs	0	4	8	17	22	n.c.
Young reared	0	9	14	37	55	80
Young/successful pair	-	2.2	1.8	2.2	2.5	-

SCOTLAND The number of breeding pairs increased only slightly, to 17, but 16 of these reared 39 young, 50% up on last year (mean 2.4 young per successful pair). There were five non-

breeding pairs holding territories. In addition to this original release area, 19 Red Kites from Germany were released in a new area at the beginning of August.

SCOTLAND	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Total pairs	2	8	11	17	22
Breeding pairs	1	5	8	15	17
Successful pairs	1	3	6	11	16
Young reared	1	7	13	26	39
Young/successful pair	1.0	1.0	2.2	2.4	2.4

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

SCOTLAND 12 territories were occupied, including two by trios of a male with two females. A record 12 clutches were laid and nine young were reared from seven broods, also new records. Four nests failed during incubation (including two involving one of the trios) and one

when the young were small. For the first time, a Scottish-bred pair was successful. There were no other territory-holding pairs. A further ten chicks were brought from Norway, reared and then released. At least 15 of the 26 birds released during 1993-95 were known to be alive in 1996.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Breeding pairs	5	6	6	6	9	8	9	6	8	9	12
Successful pairs	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	4	4	5	7
Young reared	2	3	2	5	2	7	7	5	5	7	9
Young/successful pair	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.7	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.3

Although there were five nest failures, the increased number of successful pairs and young reared make this the best year yet. The Panel is grateful to the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information. The Project is jointly supported by JNCC, SNH and RSPB.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

135 males and 136 females bred, rearing at least 263 young.

ENGLAND, SW Two localities: 1-2 pairs.
AVON One locality: female in May and juvenile in August, but did not breed here. **SOMERSET** One locality: pair reared three young.
ENGLAND, SE 18 localities or areas: 24-38 pairs.
ESSEX 11 localities: 11 summering singles or pairs. **KENT** Seven localities or areas: 24 pairs bred, rearing at least 57 young, two pairs probably bred, and one other pair.
ENGLAND, E 34 localities or areas: 81-87 'pairs' bred.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: up to four pairs and one trio (one male and two females) reared seven young. **LINCOLNSHIRE** 11 localities or areas: 25 pairs bred, rearing at least 61 young, two pairs probably bred, and three pairs possibly bred. **NORFOLK** 17 localities or areas: 51 pairs bred, rearing at least 86 young, one other pair possibly bred. **SUFFOLK** Three localities: 21 pairs bred, ten of which reared 31 young.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Four localities: 0-4 pairs.
LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: singles in April, also one in May. **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE** One locality: female on several dates from early June to late August.
ENGLAND, N Four localities: 4-6 'pairs'.
CLEVELAND One locality: pair reared three young. **LANCASHIRE** Two localities: three pairs reared seven young, and a trio (male and two females) summered. **NORTHUMBERLAND** One locality: female summered.
WALES One locality: 0-1 pair.
CEREDIGION One locality: male in June and July.
SCOTLAND, S Two localities: 0-2 pairs.
DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: pair probably bred. **LOTHIAN** One locality: female summered.
SCOTLAND, MID Five localities: 3-6 'pairs'.
ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: male and three females in May, pair in early June. **FIFE** One locality: pair or trio summered, no evidence of breeding. **PERTH & KINROSS** Three localities:

three pairs bred and two reared six young, one pair probably bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: one pair.
One locality: pair bred, rearing two young.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Breeding males	26	40	42	58	73	83	92	84	114	151	135
Breeding females	32	46	56	66	110	91	107	110	129	156	136
Young	82	126	145	172	145	198	229	244	255	277	263

After last year's surge in numbers, there has been a decline, though the total is still above the level in 1994. A paper on the status of the Marsh Harrier in Britain during 1983-95 has been published recently (Underhill-Day 1998).

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Minimum no. young fledged	Young/successful nest
England, N (all counties)	12	7	28	4.0
Wales	25	8	26	3.25
Borders & Lothian	4	1	4	4.0
Dumfries & Galloway	22	11	36	3.3
South Strathclyde	37	15	55+	1.48
Angus	1	0	0	
Perthshire	32	?	45	
Northeast Scotland	15	5+	12+	
Argyll & Bute	34	24	83	3.45
Strathspey/Moray	10	6	15	2.5
East Sutherland/Easter Ross	9	7	25	3.6
Orkney	28	?	18	
TOTALS	229		347	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The last survey into the status of the Hen Harrier in Britain, in 1988-89, concluded that there were about 630 pairs (Bibby & Etheridge 1993). A new national survey was carried out in 1998. The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for much of the above information.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

16 localities: six males and seven females reared a minimum of 14 young.

ENGLAND, SW Nine localities: (1) pair fledged three young; (2) pair bred, but nest destroyed by predator, second female seen once; (3) pair; (4)-(6) single males; (7)-(9) single females.

ENGLAND, SE One locality: pair bred, but nest destroyed by predator; also a second male.

ENGLAND, E Six localities: (1) male and two females fledged seven young from two nests; (2) pair fledged four young; (3) pair laid, but nest destroyed by predator; (4) two males and one female in May and June; (5) male displaying; (6) single female.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	10	10	14	15	9	14	12	8	15	14	16
Breeding males	7	4	5	4	8	5	7	5	7	8	6
Other males	3	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	9	8	8
Breeding females	7	5	6	6	11	7	8	6	12	9	7
Other females	3	4	4	7	2	6	4	1	11	4	7
Young	13	13	17	14	20	14	12	9	13	26	14

A disappointingly poor year, following last year’s good production, although the number of localities was slightly up. All three failed nests were destroyed by predators, with Red Foxes thought to have been responsible for two of them.



Montagu’s Harrier *Circus pygargus* (Donald Watson) from *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991*, compiled by D. W. Gibbons, J. B. Reid and R. A. Chapman.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 227 localities or areas: 160-213 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND Up to 111 localities in 21 counties; 64 pairs known to have bred, plus 32 other pairs.

WALES Up to 38 localities in five counties: 38 pairs known to have bred, plus three

other pairs.

SCOTLAND Up to 78 localities in seven recording areas: 58 pairs known to have bred, plus 18 other pairs.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. counties	31	31	31	23	30	36	34	35	33	38	33
Confirmed (pairs)	57	54	108	112	93	158	150	199	145	249	160
Possible/probable (pairs)	59	40	68	54	79	71	93	100	80	70	53
Max. total pairs	116	94	176	166	172	229	243	299	225	319	213

The picture shown by the totals in the table is less complete for 1996 than for previous years. In counties where the Goshawk is now relatively plentiful, recorders are now asked to provide summary information on the number of pairs and not, as in the past, all sightings of singles and possible pairs. Some counties are also withholding information because of the persecution to which this species is subject. We would urge that all information should be deposited with the Panel in order to assist this species’ conservation.

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Minimum no. young fledged	Young/successful nest
England, N	1	1	1	1.0
Borders & Lothian	1	0	0	
Dumfries & Galloway	2	1	1	1.0
South Strathclyde	4+	2	?	
Central Scotland	9	3	3	1.0
Tayside	25	9	12+	1.2+
Northeast Scotland	8	6	7	1.2
Argyll	54	25	29	1.2
Highland	?	36	44	1.2
Lewis & Harris	7	2	2	1.0
Uists	10	6	7	1.2
TOTALS	121+	91	106+	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The most recent population estimate of the number of Golden Eagles breeding in Britain is 422 (Green 1995). The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for much of the above information. They report that breeding success was generally poor in 1996 owing to bad weather in the early part of the year, and especially low in Tayside, Northeast Scotland and the western Highlands.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

104 pairs: 93 pairs laid eggs, rearing 155 young.

ENGLAND, SW Two localities: singles summered, one joined briefly by a second bird.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Rutland Water: eight young translocated from Scotland, of which four fledged and left the area. Two adults present from 21st April to 26th May, including perching on nesting platforms.

ENGLAND, N Three localities: (1) single from late March to mid June, joined by second bird

for several days in late May; (2)(3) singles from early July.

SCOTLAND, S One locality: single from early April.

SCOTLAND, MID AND N & W A total of 104 occupied nests was found. Five further pairs seen, but no nests located or they did not attempt breeding. Eggs were laid in 93 nests, of which 76 hatched young and 74 reared 155 young. All are new record totals.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Pairs	42	50	53	58	62	73	76	88	95	99	104
Successful pairs	24	30	38	38	44	44	48	56	69	73	74
Young reared	48	56	81	81	90	82	101	111	146	146	155
Young/successful pair	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1

This is the first time since the eighteenth century that over 100 pairs have bred in Scotland. Although the number of successful pairs was hardly up on last year, productivity did show a small, but welcome, increase. Four, or possibly five, clutches were stolen and one nest was shot out. Twelve other nests failed, with strong winds in May a factor in at least three. The Panel is grateful for the information supplied to it by Roy Dennis and the Osprey Study Group.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Minimum no. young fledged	Young/ successful nest
England, SW	4	3	9	3.0
England, Central	22	5	17	3.4
England, N	164	124	431	3.5
Wales	24	15+	24+	
Borders & Lothian	34		6+	
Dumfries & Galloway	9	8	24+	3.0
South Strathclyde	10	8	17+	2.1
Angus	14	9	27	3.0
Perthshire	26	11	27	2.5
Northeast Scotland	33	28	93+	3.3+
Argyll & Bute	2	0		
Highland	20	16	56	3.5
Orkney	20	8	19	
Shetland	19	16	56	3.5
TOTALS	401	251+	806+	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The most recent estimate of the British Merlin population is 1,300 (1,100-1,500) pairs in 1993-94 (Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998). The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for most of the Scottish information.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 190-454 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW 47-105 pairs.
AVON 4-5 pairs. CORNWALL 1 pair. DEVON 12 pairs. DORSET 6 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1 pair. HAMPSHIRE 17-55 pairs. SOMERSET 1 pair. WILTSHIRE 5-24 pairs.
ENGLAND, SE 78-197 pairs.
BERKSHIRE 5-9 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 2-10 pairs. ESSEX 30-43 pairs. GREATER LONDON 4-7 pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 6-46 pairs. KENT 11-22 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE 8-30 pairs. SURREY 10-25 pairs. SUSSEX 2-5 pairs.
ENGLAND, E 25-69 pairs.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE 14-29 pairs. HUNTINGDONSHIRE 4-11 pairs. NORFOLK 4-9 pairs.

SUFFOLK 3-20 pairs.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL 29-57 pairs.
DERBYSHIRE 17 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE 2-6 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 2 pairs. SHROPSHIRE 1 pair. WARWICKSHIRE 5-29 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE 1 pair. WEST MIDLANDS 1 pair.
ENGLAND, N 2-7 pairs.
GREATER MANCHESTER 0-3 pairs
NORTHUMBERLAND 1-2 pairs. YORKSHIRE 1-2 pairs.
WALES 9-19 pairs.
BRECONSHIRE 1-3 pairs. GWENT 5-9 pairs. RADNOR 3-6 pairs. MONTGOMERY 0-1 pair.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Confirmed (pairs)	91	108	103	140	154	159	255	152	170	161	190
Possible/probable (pairs)	202	164	226	250	287	310	327	341	330	269	264
Max. total pairs	293	272	329	390	441	469	582	493	500	430	454

A slight increase on last year, though it should be noted that this species is now classed as less scarce, with only summary information coming from more counties. There is also variation between counties in the recording of singles, many of which may be on passage, hence the most reliable figure for year-on-year comparison is the number of confirmed pairs, which rose again, though not so high as the 1992 figure.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Minimum no. young fledged	Young/ successful nest
England, SW	27	20	No data	
England, SE	10	6	No data	
England, Central	23	17	No data	
England, N	93	53	148	2.8
Wales	104	46	91	2.0
Borders & Lothian	52	26	70	2.7
Dumfries & Galloway	80	47	95	2.0
South Strathclyde	17	11	23	2.1
Angus	31	20	47	2.4
Perthshire	41	24	84+	3.5+
Central Scotland	30	22	43	2.0
Northeast Scotland	65	31	72+	2.3+
Argyll & Bute	13	9	16	1.8
Highland	33	28	56	2.0
Uists	8	8	14+	1.8+
Orkney	19	10	20+	2.0+
Shetland	1	1	4	4.0
Northern Ireland	94	58	146	2.5
TOTALS	741	437	929+	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The most recent estimate of the United Kingdom Peregrine population is 1,263 pairs in 1991 (Crick & Ratcliffe 1995). The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for most of the Scottish information.

COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

At least 275 localities: 5-335 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW 105 localities: 1-117 pairs.

AVON Two localities: three singing males.

CORNWALL Six localities: nine singing males.

DEVON Two localities: four singing males.

DORSET Up to 12 localities: 12 singing males.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Six localities: ten singing males.

SOMERSET Seven localities: nine singing males.

WILTSHIRE Up to 70 localities: pair bred, and 69 singing males.

ENGLAND, SE 40 localities: 2-45 pairs.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Three localities: pair bred and two singing males.

ESSEX Five localities: six singing males.

HERTFORDSHIRE Three localities: two singing males, plus male in August.

KENT Ten localities: pair bred, another pair probably bred, and 12 singing males.

OXFORDSHIRE Up to 14 localities: 14 singing males.

SUSSEX Five localities: five singing males.

ENGLAND, E 51 localities: 0-75 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Up to 14 localities: 14

singing males. **HUNTINGDONSHIRE** Two localities: two singing males.

NORFOLK 20 localities: up to 40 singing males.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Eight localities: eight singing males.

SUFFOLK Seven localities: 11 singing males.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL 12 localities: 0-16 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE Five localities: five singing males.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: one singing male.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Five localities: nine singing males.

WARWICKSHIRE One locality: singing male.

ENGLAND, N 27 localities: 0-37 pairs.

CHESHIRE Ten localities: 15 singing males.

CLEVELAND One locality: six singing males.

GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: two singing males.

LANCASHIRE Three localities: three singing males.

NORTHUMBERLAND Up to 11 localities: 11 singing males.

WALES 15 localities: 1-18 pairs.

BRECON Two localities: two singing males.
GLAMORGAN One locality: four singing males.
GWENT One locality: singing male.
MEIRIONNYDD One locality: singing male.
PEMBROKE Three localities: three singing males.
RADNOR Up to seven localities: pair bred, and six singing males.
SCOTLAND, S 14 localities: 0-14 pairs.
AYRSHIRE Three localities: three singing males.
BORDERS Four localities: four singing males.
DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three localities:

three singing males.
LOTHIANS Four localities: four singing males.
SCOTLAND, MID Five localities: 1-6 pairs.
ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: two singing males.
ANGUS & DUNDEE Four localities: pair bred, and three singing males.
SCOTLAND, N & W Six localities: 0-7 pairs.
ARGYLL One locality: singing male.
ORKNEY One locality: two singing males.
ROSS & CROMARTY One locality: singing male.
SHETLAND Three localities: three singing males.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	152	130	904	255	88	319	172	359	320	275
Confirmed (pairs)	1	5	27	13	2	9	1	8	15	5
Possible/probable (pairs)	245	158	1,628	364	105	481	202	604	500	330
Max. total pairs	246	163	1,655	377	107	490	203	612	515	335

A relatively poor year in most areas. Numbers were up a little in Wales and in southwest England, though much reduced in central England.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

Eight localities: 0-13 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, E Two localities: 0-4 pairs.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) up to three singing males in June and July; (2) singing male on one date in June.
ENGLAND, N One locality: 0-1 pair.
CLEVELAND One locality: one singing male in May.
SCOTLAND, S & W One locality: 0-2 pairs.

CLYDE One locality: two singing males in early April.
SCOTLAND, MID Three localities: 0-3 pairs.
ABERDEENSHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males during breeding season.
SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: 0-3 pairs.
ARGYLL One locality: three singing males in May.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. counties	3	4	5	7	6	5	9	12	4	5	5
No. localities	3	7	6	14	14	7	12	19	5	8	8
No. singing males	4	18	10	21	21	14	14	31	11	10	13

Another indifferent year, with slightly more singing males than in 1995, but the same number of localities.

CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

605 pairs or singing males.

ENGLAND, N One locality: 0-1 pair.
CLEVELAND One locality: singing male on 26th May only.
WALES Three localities: 1-3 pairs.
CAERNARFON One locality: pair probably bred.
MONTGOMERY One locality: singing male on 30th April.
RADNOR One locality: singing male on 28th April.
SCOTLAND S One locality: 0-1 pair.
CLYDE One locality: singing male on 25th May.
SCOTLAND, MID Five localities: 0-5 pairs.
ABERDEENSHIRE Five localities: five singing males.
SCOTLAND, N & W MAINLAND Five localities: 1-10 pairs.

CAITHNESS Two localities: pair bred, and two singing males.
ROSS & CROMARTY Singing male on several nights in July.
SUTHERLAND Two localities: (1) four or five singing males in May and June; (2) two singing males.
SCOTLAND, N & W ISLANDS 0-584 pairs.
Totals of singing males: HIGHLAND – INNER HEBRIDES 21 (Skye 21), STRATHCLYDE – INNER HEBRIDES 177 (Coll 40, Tiree 117, Iona 5, Colonsay & Oronsay 8, Islay 7), ORKNEY 43, SHETLAND 1, WESTERN ISLES 342 (Lewis 104, Harris 5, Berneray 1, North Uist 66, Benbecula 27, South Uist 81, Barra & Vatersay 58).
N IRELAND One pair.
ANTRIM One locality: pair bred.

A total of 584 singing males was found by RSPB, SNH and Scottish Crofters' Union teams on the Scottish islands this year, compared with 537 in 1995 and 463 in 1994. This exceeds the 540 reported in 1988. The increase was patchy, with larger numbers on all the Outer Hebridean islands, but fewer on some of the Inner Hebrides, including the most important, Tiree. The return of a single bird to Berneray, after a two-year gap, was pleasing. The Small Isles are, however, still deserted. The increases can be seen to reflect the widespread implementation of the RSPB/SNH/SCU Corncrake Initiative and it is certainly encouraging that it is having a beneficial effect.

The breeding record from Northern Ireland is the first confirmed there since 1989.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

ENGLAND, E

NORFOLK One locality: up to nine birds

present. Two pairs attempted to breed, but both were unsuccessful.

This is the eighth year running with no young reared.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

One locality: single male.

ENGLAND, E One locality: male present all year.

The single bird present at Titchwell, Norfolk, throughout 1995 stayed on this year, too (*Brit. Birds* 90: 468).

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

At least 25 localities: 592-654 pairs reared a minimum of 189 young.

ENGLAND, SE 12 localities.

ESSEX Five localities: (1) 46 pairs bred, 31 young fledged; (2) 62 pairs of which 16 bred, all nests destroyed by predator; (3) 16 pairs bred, only four young seen; (4) three pairs seen with broods; (5) two pairs bred successfully. KENT Five localities: (1) 61 pairs bred, 58 young fledged; (2) 28 pairs bred, only four young fledged; (3) 26 pairs of which ten bred, all failed; (4) 14 pairs bred, 16 young fledged; (5) three pairs and three young seen on 31st July. SUSSEX Two localities: (1) pair raised one young; (2) pair built nest, no young reported.

ENGLAND, E 12 localities.

NORFOLK Nine localities: (1) 52 pairs bred, 30

young fledged; (2) 38 pairs bred, success unknown; (3) 37 pairs bred, seven young fledged; (4) 24 pairs bred, success unknown; (5) 18 pairs bred, success 'poor'; (6) 16 pairs bred, all failed; (7) ten pairs bred, all failed; (8) seven pairs bred, ten young fledged; (9) pair raised one young. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: 14 pairs bred, five young fledged. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) 83 pairs bred, 16 young fledged; Red Foxes accounted for 50 nests just before hatching; (2) 91 pairs bred, no young fledged owing to predation by several different species.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair laid twice, but failed both times.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	15	18	27	24	21	21	29	25	29	25	25
Confirmed (pairs)	255	341	389	521	355	448	492	436	623	613	592
Young reared (min.)	227	315	136	150	200	305	336	347	181	149	189

The number of confirmed pairs has declined a little, and poor weather and, especially, predation continue to keep production at low levels, with some of the largest colonies suffering the worst. Of interest were the two inland breeding attempts by single pairs, at Welney, on the Ouse Washes, and at Rutland Water.

STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Seven counties: 174-188 pairs.

ENGLAND, SW 51-59 pairs.

HAMPSHIRE 19 pairs bred and fledged 15

young, plus two other pairs. WILTSHIRE 32 pairs bred and fledged 17 young, plus six other pairs.

ENGLAND, SE 5-6 pairs.
BERKSHIRE Four pairs bred and fledged five young, plus one other pair. OXFORDSHIRE Pair bred and fledged two young.
ENGLAND, E 118-123 pairs.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two pairs, not proved to

breed. NORFOLK Brecks: 59 pairs bred and fledged 60 young, plus one other pair. Elsewhere: four pairs bred and fledged three young. SUFFOLK Brecks: 54 pairs bred and fledged 53 young, plus one other pair. Elsewhere: pair bred unsuccessfully, plus one other pair.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Confirmed (pairs)	103	137	126	126	139	139	155	146	141	165	174
Possible/probable (pairs)	12	0	3	17	10	16	4	16	32	9	14
Max. total pairs	115	137	129	143	149	155	159	162	173	174	188
Min. no. young fledged	n.c.	n.c.	62	79	112	123	111	101	91	164	155

An increase in the number of breeding and non-breeding pairs, but a slight reduction in the number of young fledged. The cold weather in May caused a number of nest failures. The Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green, RSPB, for his assistance in compiling the data.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Possible/probable pairs	Definite breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	1	34	35
England, SE	51	85	136
England, E	20	56	76
England, Central	31	57	88
England, N	49	105	154
Wales	1	58	59
Borders	1	0	1
Angus & Dundee	2	0	2
Northeast Scotland	0	1	1
Moray & Nairn	0	1	1
TOTALS	156	397	553

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The most recent estimate of the British Little Ringed Plover population is 825-1,070 pairs in 1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

DOTTEREL *Charadrius morinellus*

Outside main Scottish breeding areas: one pair probably breeding

ENGLAND, N One locality.
CUMBRIA One locality: pair in May.

The Panel seeks records only if away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay, and accepts that at least some of the birds on hilltops in southern Scotland and northern England will be on passage. A paper examining the history of breeding by Dotterels in northern England will be published shortly in *British Birds*.

TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: up to two pairs.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: two males and at least one female at a traditional site in late May and June; both males were seen displaying and a female was seen going to a nest.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	4	2	2	1	0	1	2	0	0	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	1
Max. total pairs	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2

To avoid unnecessary disturbance, the minimum amount of monitoring of this species is carried out, just enough to establish presence.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

One locality: two pairs bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: two adults were giving alarm calls and performing

distraction displays about 1 km apart at a traditional site.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	4	1	2
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Max. total pairs	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	1	4	1	2

As with the preceding species, only minimal monitoring is carried out.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

Eight localities: breeding occurred at one.

ENGLAND, SE One locality.

SUSSEX One locality: male and six females; eggs laid, but no young fledged.

ENGLAND, E One locality.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: three males and two females, but no lekking.

ENGLAND, N Six localities.

CHESHIRE Five localities: up to 25 in April, six in May and only one in June; display at two sites. YORKSHIRE One locality: at least 17 birds present, but no evidence of breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	7	16	14	15	8	9	21	10	13	7	8
No. leks	3	10	6	6	1	4	7	7	3	3	3
Nests/broods	1	1	1	1	3	7	0	0	2	0	1+

Another poor year, even though there was a proved breeding attempt.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

12 localities: 34-41 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SE Four localities.

ESSEX One locality: pair attempted to breed, but no young seen. KENT Three localities: (1) two pairs bred, no young fledged; (2) pair bred, success unknown; (3) two pairs, but no evidence of breeding.

ENGLAND, E Four localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) 14 pairs bred and fledged at least 12 young, two other pairs; (2) nine pairs bred and fledged at least ten young; (3) pair, but no evidence of breeding.

NORFOLK One locality: three pairs bred, all failed.

ENGLAND, N One locality.

NORTH YORKSHIRE One locality: pair probably bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W Three localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair bred and fledged two young.

SHETLAND Two localities: (1) two pairs bred and fledged two young, third pair present briefly; (2) pair bred, not known if young fledged.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	19	13	17	14	16	18	24	16	22	15	12
Confirmed (pairs)	23	28	36	34	33	28	20	28	20	28	34
Possible/probable (pairs)	24	12	28	22	33	25	38	5	16	7	7
Max. total pairs	47	40	64	56	66	53	58	33	36	35	41

The number of sites has further declined, but the number of breeding pairs is the highest for several years. The total of 26 young fledged is also satisfactorily higher than last year's 16. Those in Scotland are likely to be mostly of the race *islandica*.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Away from Orkney and Shetland: one pair bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality.

apparently successfully, in locality where believed also to have bred in 1995.

SUTHERLAND One locality: pair bred,

This is the first confirmed breeding away from Orkney and Shetland for five years, though note that the site was also used last year.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

The following limited information was received:

SCOTLAND, MID

ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W

ARGYLL One locality: pair probably bred at regular site.

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The breeding population of this species in Britain is estimated to be 1,440 pairs (Hancock *et al.* 1997). The bulk of these are in Highland region.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

One locality: 0-1 pair.

SCOTLAND, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: pair probably bred, agitated behaviour and calling observed.

Breeding was also strongly suspected in 1995, when a pair was seen displaying and singing during 3rd May to 12th June (1995 *Scottish Bird Report*: 34), but the species was not included in the Panel's report. The only confirmed breeding by this species in Britain took place on Speyside, Scotland, in 1959 (Clifton 1959).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

Three localities: eight pairs bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W Three localities: (1)(2) three pairs bred at each site and young known to have

fledged; (3) two pairs bred and young known to have fledged.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	2	3	4	6	2	2	4	4	8	6	3
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	6	7	8
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	1	1	4	1	1	5	6	5	4	0
Max. total pairs	3	4	4	6	2	2	6	8	11	11	8

Only these three sites were monitored, but successful breeding was reported from all three.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two localities: 40 breeding males reared at least 37 young.

SCOTLAND, N & W Two localities.

SHETLAND Two localities on Fetlar: (1) 36

breeding males, at least 34 young fledged; (2) four breeding males, at least three young fledged.

Although the number of breeding males was the highest ever, the production was comparatively poor this year.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

18 localities: 31-45 pairs.

ENGLAND, SW Three localities.

DORSET One locality: six pairs bred, but all failed.

HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) five pairs bred, but success unknown; (2) pair holding territory.

ENGLAND, SE Seven localities.

ESSEX Four localities: (1) five pairs probably bred, plus adult; (2)-(4) singles present.

KENT Three localities: (1) nine pairs fledged 12 young, plus three other pairs; (2) three pairs fledged four young, plus one pair; (3) three pairs bred, success unknown.

ENGLAND, E Six localities.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1) two pairs

fledged two young; (2) pair incubated, but failed; (3)(4) single displaying pairs. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, no young fledged; (2) pair present and displaying, but no breeding attempt.

ENGLAND, N One locality.

CHESHIRE One locality: pair (adult and second-summer) summered in colony of Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*.

SCOTLAND One locality

REGION WITHHELD A single adult was present in a colony of Black-headed Gulls in April and May.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	5	3	9	5	10	13	15	14	16	16	18
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	6	11	15	19	15	16	18	31
Possible/probable (pairs)	4	2	10	3	5	8	12	17	14	10	14
Max. total pairs	5	3	15	9	16	23	31	32	30	28	45

After apparently levelling off, the number of breeding pairs has leapt up. At least 18 young were reared.

LESSER CRESTED TERN *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one female bred with Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandwicensis*.

ENGLAND, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female bred

with Sandwich Tern, fledged one hybrid young at usual site on Farne Islands (*Brit. Birds* 90: 487).

This is the third hybrid young to fledge from this pairing; the others were in 1989 and 1992.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

11 localities: 66-75 pairs breeding, fledging a minimum of 34 young.

ENGLAND, SW One locality: pair bred, success unknown.

ENGLAND, E Two localities: (1) pair bred, but nest washed out, second pair present, but did not attempt to breed; (2) pair displaying, but no breeding attempt.

ENGLAND, N Four localities: (1) 24 pairs bred, fledging 26 young; (2) 14 pairs bred, success unknown; (3) two pairs bred, success unknown,

five other pairs; (4) pair bred, fledging one young, second pair present.

WALES One locality: pair bred, success unknown.

SCOTLAND, MID Two localities: (1) seven pairs bred, no young fledged; (2) pair bred, one young fledged, second pair present; (3) pair bred, no young fledged.

NORTHERN IRELAND One locality: 13 pairs bred and fledged six young.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	10	13	17	15	13	15	18	14	15	11
Confirmed (pairs)	169	164	172	93	52	62	84	74	72	66
Possible/probable (pairs)	164	33	5	31	5	10	21	24	13	9
Max. total pairs	333	197	177	124	57	72	105	98	85	75

A further decline in numbers of both localities and breeding pairs. Better news comes, however, from the Republic of Ireland, where a minimum of 557 pairs was recorded at Rockabill, Co. Dublin, similar to the high level in 1995, while the numbers at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, doubled to 120 pairs.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Pairs in 1995	Pairs in 1996	% change
England, SW	90	95	+5.6
England, SE	156	144	-7.7
England, E	687	742	+8.0
England, NE	219	187	-14.6
England, NW	51	60	+17.6
Wales	65	78	+20.0
Scotland	52	92	+76.9
TOTALS	1320	1398	+5.9

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The figures above are taken from Thompson *et al.* (1997) and are a sample of the total British breeding population, estimated at 2,400 pairs in 1985-87 (Lloyd *et al.* 1991).

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

The following summary information has been received. Several county recorders emphasised how incomplete their information was and added estimates, which are shown.

Area	Possible/ probable pairs	Proved pairs	Total pairs	County comment
Avon		5	5	
Cornwall	5	6	11	Believed complete
Devon	2	40	42	Believed complete
Hampshire	13	12	25	Est. at least 100 pairs
Wiltshire			74	No breakdown available
Buckinghamshire		6	6	Est. 20+ pairs
Essex		30	30	Est. about 100 pairs
Hertfordshire	1	4	5	
Kent	13	13	26	Believed complete
Surrey	7	6	13	Considerable underestimate
Sussex	15	9	24+	Considerable underestimate
Cambridgeshire	14	12	26	

Area	Possible/ probable pairs	Proved pairs	Total pairs	County comment
Huntingdonshire		3	3+	Underestimate
Lincolnshire		22	22	
Norfolk		59	59	No count of non-breeding pairs
Northamptonshire	40	15	55	Believed complete
Suffolk	14	6	20	Believed complete
Derbyshire		4	4	
Nottinghamshire		22	22	Est. 50-100 pairs
Shropshire		3	3	
Warwickshire	7	3	10	Underestimate
Worcestershire	12	?	12	Est. 20+ pairs
Cheshire		12	12	Known to have nested
Cleveland	1		1	Believed (nearly) complete
Cumbria		7	7	
Greater Manchester		3	3	Believed complete
Lancashire		20	20+	
Northumberland	9+	7+	16+	Underestimate
Yorkshire		16	16	
Anglesey		10	10	Underestimate
Brecon		5	5	Underestimate
Caernarfon			25-30	Believed complete, no breakdown
Ceredigion	2	12	14	Underestimate
Gwent	2	1	3	
Montgomery		11	11	Underestimate
Pembroke	18	2	20	Est. about 100 pairs
Borders	1		1	Believed complete
Ayr	4	10	14	Underestimate
Clyde	5	5	10	Believed complete
Clyde islands		4	4	
Dumfries & Galloway	15+	47	62+	Survey areas only
Lothian		2	2	Believed complete
Forth	2		2	
Aberdeenshire	2	1	3	Believed complete
Fife			0	No breeding since 1993
Moray & Nairn	5	5	10	Believed complete
Argyll	15	26	41	Survey areas only
Highland	2	10	12	Believed complete
TOTALS	226+	496+	821-826	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The British breeding population of the Barn Owl was estimated at 4,400 in 1982-85 (Shawyer 1987) and 4,000 pairs in 1996-98 (Toms in prep.).

COMMON KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

The following information has been received. Several county recorders emphasised how incomplete their information was and added estimates, which are shown.

Area	Possible/ probable (pairs)	Proved (pairs)	Total pairs	County comments
Cornwall	1	1	2	Believed complete
Devon	19		19	Believed complete
Hampshire	28		28	200-350 pairs in 1992
Wiltshire	18		18	20-29 pairs in 1990-95
Buckinghamshire	c.50		c.50	Est. 100 pairs in 1992
Essex	c.100		c.100	Est. 200 pairs in 1989
Hertfordshire	18	12	30	Est. 100 pairs in 1993
Kent	18	6	24	Believed complete
Middlesex	6		6	Believed complete
Surrey	29		29	No estimate
Sussex	10	1	11	
Cambridgeshire	18	13	31	Believed complete
Huntingdonshire		6	6	Believed complete
Norfolk		10-13	10-13	Believed complete
Northamptonshire	21	6	27	Believed complete
Suffolk	27	3	30	Believed complete
Derbyshire	5++	15	20++	
Warwickshire	9	2	11+	Closer to 50 pairs
Worcestershire	24	3	27	Definitely under-recorded
West Midlands	5	1	6	Underestimate
Cheshire		7	7	
Cleveland	1		1	
Greater Manchester		30-40	30-40	1995 estimate
Lancashire		16	16	
Northumberland	11+	4+	15+	Believed complete
West Yorkshire	1	3	4	
Brecon	12		12	
Ceredigion		3+	3+	No reliable information
Pembroke				Est. 50 pairs in 1994
Gwent		5	5	
Borders	13	3	16	Believed complete
Clyde & Ayr	10	1	11	Believed complete
Dumfries & Galloway		3-5	3-5	Believed complete
Lothian	5	1	6	Believed complete
Forth	5	1	6	Believed complete
Angus & Dundee	5		5	Believed complete
Fife	5		5	Believed complete
Perthshire & Kinross		1	1	
Moray & Nairn	2		2	Believed complete
Argyll	1		1	Believed complete
Highland		2-4	2-4	Believed complete
TOTALS	477++	159-176	636-653	

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The British breeding population was estimated at 3,300-5,500 pairs in 1988-91 (Stone *et al.* 1997).

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

One locality: pair bred.

WALES

MONTGOMERY One locality: pair bred and fledged three young.

This totally unexpected record is the first proven breeding for Wales and the first confirmed breeding in Britain since 1977, when no fewer than four pairs bred in southern England.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Four localities: four singing males.

ENGLAND, SW One locality: male singing on 18th April.

SCOTLAND, N & W Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males in May or June.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	9	10	9	8	6	6	1	6	1	3	4
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	8	9	9	7	6	5	2	5	1	3	4
Max. total pairs	9	10	10	8	6	6	2	6	1	3	4

Slightly up on 1995, but still not amounting to much.

WOOD LARK *Lullula arborea*

809 pairs or singing males.

ENGLAND, SW 170 breeding pairs or singing males.
DEVON Two main areas; 13 singing males.
DORSET 32 singing males. HAMPSHIRE 124 pairs or singing males in incomplete survey.
WILTSHIRE One locality: pair present.
ENGLAND, SE 121 breeding pairs or singing males.
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Three singing males.
KENT One locality: two pairs. SURREY Whole

county: 79 breeding pairs or singing males.
SUSSEX Whole county: 37 breeding pairs or singing males.
ENGLAND, E 513 breeding pairs or singing males.
NORFOLK Two main areas: 177 breeding pairs or singing males. SUFFOLK Two main areas: 336 breeding pairs or singing males.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL Five breeding pairs or singing males in an un-named county.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. counties	13	11	12	10	14	12	14	13	13	16	11
Confirmed (pairs)	47	28	88	156	64	39	124	213	100	261	n.c.
Possible/probable (pairs)	181	165	157	54	272	303	535	408	524	586	n.c.
Max. total pairs	228	193	245	210	336	362	659	621	624	847	809

The census which took place in 1997 should give a better picture of both numbers and distribution. The above figures are known to be incomplete. No distinction is possible between confirmed pairs and possible/probable pairs.

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

Two localities: two singles.

ENGLAND, E One locality: female in late June and July.
ENGLAND, N One locality: male in early July.

After last year's breeding record, there were no reports from Scotland.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

46 localities: 28-65 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW Five localities: 4-6 pairs.
DORSET One locality: pair bred and fledged two young. HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1) pair bred and fledged seven young in two broods; (2) pair bred and fledged two young, plus singing male; (3) singing male in late May and early June. SOMERSET One locality: pair bred and fledged two young (first breeding record for county).
ENGLAND, SE 22 localities: 16-30 pairs breeding.
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) single, July-September. ESSEX Two localities: (1) two pairs bred successfully; (2) pair bred. INNER LONDON & MIDDLESEX Five localities: (1) pair bred, plus singing male; (2) pair; (3) two singing males; (4)(5) single singing males. KENT Ten localities: (1) three pairs bred, young seen; (2) two pairs bred and fledged nine young; (3) pair bred, plus singing male; (4)(5) single pairs bred; (6) pair; (7)-(10) single singing males. SURREY Three localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) pair bred; (3) singing male.
ENGLAND, E 11 localities: 5-20 pairs breeding.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred, plus two pairs; (2) singing male.
NORFOLK Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: (1) two singing males; (2) singing male.
SUFFOLK Four localities: (1) pair bred, plus four singing males; (2) at least three pairs bred; (3)(4) single pairs probably bred.
ENGLAND, CENTRAL Five localities: 1-9 pairs breeding.
DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair bred, plus singing male. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: juvenile in August, possibly locally bred.
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: four singing males. WEST MIDLANDS Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.
ENGLAND, N Two localities: two pairs breeding.
GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair bred and fledged at least one young. No search of city centre because of access restrictions following bomb. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair bred.
SCOTLAND, S One locality: juvenile, with yellow gape, on 4th August, perhaps bred locally.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36	44	53	66	58	46
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23	14	32	32	19	28
Possible/probable (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46	57	44	63	63	37
Max. total pairs	119	109	118	82	74	69	71	76	95	82	65

Numbers have declined further, but some areas were not surveyed, or only partially covered.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality: adult carrying food in May; no further details.
ENGLAND, N Two localities: (1) one carrying food on 5th June; (2) pair apparently holding territory in early June.
SCOTLAND, S One locality: single in May-June,

possibly paired with Mistle Thrush *T. pilaris*.
SCOTLAND, N & W Two localities: (1) one or two adults seen in June, one in July; two juveniles trapped in late August and early September, presumed bred; (2) two adults on 4th August, with third bird, possibly juvenile; breeding suspected.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	2	7	7	12	12	13	7	5	5	6	6
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	2	3	5	2	2	2	0	1	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	0	6	5	10	7	11	8	3	5	5	5
Max. total pairs	2	7	7	13	12	13	11	5	5	6	6

A very similar picture to the last few years.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

28 localities: 3-38 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SE Two localities: (1) one singing in May; (2) one seen in May.
SCOTLAND, MID Seven localities: (1) pair; (2)-(6) singles singing; (7) one seen in suitable habitat.

SCOTLAND, N & W 19 localities: (1) pair bred; (2)(3) single pairs bred, but failed; (4)(5) single pairs probably bred; (6)-(19) total of 24 singing males.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	32	39	22	38	17	15	13	22	15	9	28
Confirmed (pairs)	20	9	10	12	6	7	9	5	4	3	3
Possible/probable (pairs)	26	41	30	39	15	13	15	22	15	11	35
Max. total pairs	46	50	49	51	21	20	24	27	19	14	38

A larger number than usual, but still small in comparison with the likely population.

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

168 localities: 519-574 singing males.

ENGLAND, SW 107 localities: 393-432 singing males.

AVON Two localities: one or two singing males.

CORNWALL Six localities: 25-28 singing males.

DEVON 12 localities: 79-88 singing males.

DORSET 29 localities: 89-97 singing males.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: four singing males.

HAMPSHIRE 33 localities: 129-143 singing males.

ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: singing male.

SOMERSET 20 localities: 63-67 singing males.

WILTSHIRE Two localities: two singing males.

ENGLAND, SE 18 localities: 33-39 singing males.

BERKSHIRE Six localities: 15-16 singing males.

ESSEX One locality: one or two singing males.

KENT Four localities: six to eight singing males.

OXFORDSHIRE Two localities: three singing males.

SURREY One locality: one singing male.

SUSSEX Four localities: seven to nine singing males.

ENGLAND, E 21 localities: 48-55 singing males.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE (including HUNTINGDONSHIRE & PETERBOROUGH) One locality: singing male. NORFOLK 15 localities: 41-48 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: two singing males. SUFFOLK Three localities: four singing males.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Three localities: five singing males.

WARWICKSHIRE Two localities: four singing males. WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male.

WALES 19 localities: 40-43 singing males.

CARMARTHEN Six localities: 14 singing males.

CEREDIGION One locality: four or five singing males.

GLAMORGAN Two localities: 12 singing males.

GWENT Six localities: seven or eight singing males.

PEMBROKE Four localities: three or four singing males.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. counties	11	14	14	15	21	17	18	21	23	25	28
Confirmed (pairs)	4	31	24	12	19	27	15	11	14	15	n.c.
Possible/probable (pairs)	175	156	174	196	326	214	273	306	318	426	} 519-574
Max. total pairs	179	187	198	208	345	241	298	317	332	441	

The figures set out above come from the first systematic survey of this species in Britain, which was carried out in summer 1996 and produced, as expected, the highest count since colonisation took place in the early 1970s (Wotton *et al.* 1998).

RIVER WARBLER *Locustella fluviatilis*

Two localities: two singing males (*Brit. Birds* 90: 499).

ENGLAND, CENTRAL STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: singing male, Doxey Marshes, from 20th June to 22nd July.

ENGLAND, N NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: singing male, near Bellingham, on 16th-30th June.

Singing males reported for the fourth year running, both staying for longer than any previous individual.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: single on 27th June.

ENGLAND, E One locality.

NORFOLK One locality: singing male from 24th July to 1st August. SUFFOLK Two, both

considered to be on passage.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL One locality.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: singing male on 9th-12th June.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	9	16	10	13	5	13	13	5	7	2	3
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	11	20	13	17	9	16	20	4	9	3	3
Max. total pairs	12	20	13	17	10	16	22	8	10	3	3

Another poor year, and none singing in Suffolk.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

11 localities: 3-22 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW One locality: singing male on 21st May only.

ENGLAND, SE Six localities: (1) pair bred, plus five pairs; (2)(3) single pairs bred; (4) four pairs present and probably bred; (5) two pairs present and probably bred; (6) two pairs.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Two localities: (1) two singing males, no females seen; (2) singing male in early June.

ENGLAND, N Two localities.
GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	18	11	13	10	12	15	13	15	22	16	11
Confirmed (pairs)	12	10	6	11	13	9	9	12	0	2	3
Possible/probable (pairs)	16	11	14	11	11	23	26	46	48	29	19
Max. total pairs	28	21	20	22	24	32	35	58	48	31	22

A further worrying decline, with no breeding reported from Worcestershire this year.

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one singing male (*Brit. Birds* 90: 500).

ENGLAND, SE KENT One locality: singing male, Elmley, from 30th May to 16th June.

The seventh consecutive year in which males have been reported in song, but as last year only one record.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

Three localities: three singing birds.

ENGLAND, SW HAMPSHIRE One locality: one singing, Lower Test NR, on 12th June.

ENGLAND, E NORFOLK Two localities: (1)(2) single singing birds, one on 28th May, one on 30th May.

Not so exciting as the recent breeding record, but recorded in line with the Panel's policy.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

Up to 552 territories identified.

ENGLAND, SW County totals: AVON 2, CORNWALL 11, DEVON 163-222, DORSET no count, HAMPSHIRE 83-85 in very incomplete survey, ISLE OF WIGHT 6, SOMERSET 31.

ENGLAND, SE County totals: BERKSHIRE 1, SURREY 144, SUSSEX 45.
ENGLAND, E County totals: NORFOLK 2, SUFFOLK 3.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. counties	5	8	6	5	8	8	7	11	10	12	12
Confirmed (pairs)	15	8	26	23	55	67	63	93	n.c.	n.c.	n.c.
Possible/probable (pairs)	293	239	616	499	873	634	863	1,053	1,675	1,679	552
Max. total pairs	308	247	639	522	928	701	926	1,146	1,675	1,679	552

The total is not very meaningful in the absence of systematic surveys of several very important areas (e.g. Dorset and Hampshire).

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

35 localities: 4-60 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SW 13 localities: 2-32 pairs breeding.

DEVON One locality: singing male in June.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Four localities: (1) two singing males; (2)-(4) single singing males.

HAMPSHIRE Three localities: (1) pair bred, and 14 singing males; (2)(3) single singing males.

SOMERSET One locality: pair feeding young.

WILTSHIRE Four localities: (1) four singing males; (2) two singing males; (3)(4) single singing males.

ENGLAND, SE 16 localities: 1-21 pairs breeding.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two singing males.

ESSEX Two localities: (1) two singing males; (2) singing male.

HERTFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair, including male singing; (2)

singing male. **KENT** Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. **LONDON** One locality: singing male. **SURREY** Two localities: (1) pair bred and three singing males; (2) singing male. **SUSSEX** Six localities: (1) pair, including singing male; (2)-(6) single singing males.

ENGLAND, E Two localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.

NORFOLK One locality: pair, including singing male. **SUFFOLK** One locality: singing male.

ENGLAND, CENTRAL Four localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

DERBYSHIRE Two localities: (1) male bred, paired with Goldcrest *R. regulus*, second singing male; (2) singing male. **LEICESTERSHIRE** One locality: singing male. **WORCESTERSHIRE** One locality: singing male.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	19	37	44	52	48	19	15	20	41	35	35
Confirmed (pairs)	1	8	11	19	9	2	3	3	4	4	4
Possible/probable (pairs)	28	74	72	112	88	20	16	25	62	52	56
Max. total pairs	29	82	83	131	97	22	19	28	66	56	60

Slightly up on last year and including a hybrid pairing (with Goldcrest).

BEARDED TIT *Panurus biarmicus*

The following incomplete information has been received, amounting to 221-232 pairs.

ENGLAND, SW **DORSET** No information received. **HAMPSHIRE** 15-17 pairs.

ENGLAND, SE **ESSEX** 17 pairs. **KENT** Two pairs (incomplete). **SUSSEX** 25 pairs.

ENGLAND, E **CAMBRIDGESHIRE** Two pairs, did not breed. **NORFOLK** 71-75 pairs and declining. **SUFFOLK** 49-54 pairs.

ENGLAND, N **LANCASHIRE** 40 pairs.

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. In 1992, the British breeding population was estimated at 339-408 pairs (Campbell *et al.* 1996), but it is thought to have declined since then.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

22 localities: 7-22 pairs breeding, producing a minimum of 16 young.

ENGLAND, SE One locality: one singing male.

ENGLAND, E 69 sites surveyed, of which 20 held birds. A minimum of seven breeding pairs found, of which six are known to have fledged young and

one nest failed. Two other pairs probably bred, and there were pairs or singing males at 11 other sites.

SCOTLAND, S One locality: singing male in early June.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	13	22	35	29	38	27	37	33	34	34	22
Confirmed (pairs)	5	11	16	15	10	16	14	14	7	8	7
Possible/probable (pairs)	11	20	25	22	32	12	23	19	28	27	15
Max. total pairs	16	31	41	37	42	28	37	33	35	35	22

A poor year, though numbers are down partly because of less survey work outside the core area in Eastern England. The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Three localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, E Three localities: (1)-(3) singles seen in May.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
No. localities	3	8	6	3	7	5	13	6	7	1	3
Confirmed (pairs)	4	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	2	11	6	6	7	4	12	6	7	1	3
Max. total pairs	6	13	7	6	8	5	13	6	8	1	3

The three birds reported were all in suitable habitat, but two stayed only a day or two, and the third was seen on two occasions three weeks apart.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*

The following information was received:

Area	Breeding pairs	Young reared (pairs)	Productivity
WALES			
Anglesey	26		
Caernarfon (Bardsey only)	61-68	7 (5)	1.4
Meirionnydd	13-15		
Ceredigion	20	42 (15)	2.8
Pembroke	46	95 (46)	2.1
Montgomery	2		
SCOTLAND			
Dumfries & Galloway	1	2 (1)	2.0
Colonsay	10	8 (4)	2.0
Islay (The Oa only)	6	10 (5)	2.0
Mull	1	0	
TOTALS	186-195	164 (76)	2.2

This species has now been added to the Panel's list. The male in Dumfries & Galloway had lost his mate before the 1995 breeding season, but found a new female and nested in the usual site.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

No reports of summering anywhere in Scotland. This is particularly disappointing after 1995 proved to be the best year since 1984.

EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs.

ENGLAND, SW One locality.

CORNWALL One locality: singing male in May and June.

ENGLAND, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: pair bred successfully.

ENGLAND, E Four localities.

NORFOLK Four localities: (1)(2) single singing males; (3) female on 11th-12th April; (4) single on 21st April.

A breeding record from Kent was a pleasant surprise, particularly as there was no sign of breeding in Devon in 1996.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Although this species is now on the Panel's list, by virtue of its being on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, no meaningful information was received.

SCOTTISH CROSSBILL *Loxia scotica*

The only information received on this species, new to the Panel's list, was that 17 nests were found in Northeast Scotland as part of an RSPB study.

PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

One locality: pair bred.

SCOTLAND, N & W One locality: pair bred and thought to be several additional pairs in same area.

As reported last year, birds referable to this species appear to be breeding in Scotland, but more work is proceeding to discover just how common they are.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Six localities or areas: 0-10+ pairs breeding.

ENGLAND, SE One locality: male on 26th June.

ENGLAND, E Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing immature males.

SCOTLAND N & W Marked influx in Orkney

and Shetland during 20th May to 10th June, with up to 32 birds involved, several of which sang, but had largely dispersed by the end of the month.

These somewhat inconclusive observations suggest that talk of colonisation, which seemed quite likely a few years ago, is still premature. A paper by D. I. M. Wallace on this species will be published shortly in *British Birds*.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Seven areas or localities: up to 19 pairs breeding.

SCOTLAND, MID AND N & W Seven areas or localities: 19 pairs or singing males.

A very small number of mainly casual observations.

CIRL BUNTING *Emberiza cirius*

337 breeding pairs.

ENGLAND, SW

CORNWALL Three localities: (1) territorial male, also seen carrying food, though no female or young seen; (2) singing male; (3) female in April. DEVON The sample tetrad

survey now carried out on an annual basis, led to an estimate of 333 pairs as a county total. A study of 31 nests showed productivity of 1.85 young per nest. SOMERSET One locality: pair visiting bird-table during April to June.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Confirmed (pairs)	36	48	98	113	92	43	42	n.c.
Possible/probable (pairs)	83	85	143	207	269	369	337	337
Max. total pairs	119	133	241	320	361	412	379	337

The tetrad survey suggests a decline in numbers for the second year running. The Panel is grateful to the RSPB for the Devon data.

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LOOKING BACK



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO:

'The year has passed almost without a single occurrence of such regular migrants as the Glaucous Gull, Little Auk, Fulmar Petrel, and three species of Buzzard. No Eider Ducks are reported, although Mr Paynter describes them as having had an unusually prolific breeding season at the Farne Islands. The chief occurrences of 1898 are a Roller, two Little Bustards, four Cranes, and a Ruddy Shelduck. In August there was a large migration of Crossbills, which are not, strictly speaking, autumn migrants. September was far too mild to delay rare birds on passage, which, according to previous experience in open weather, pass over Norfolk; but the common immigrants generally come to us as much in fine weather as in foul, that is,

those like the Blackbird, Grey Crow, and Shore Lark, which have no intention of going farther than England.'

(*Zoologist* 3 (fourth series): 116, March 1899)

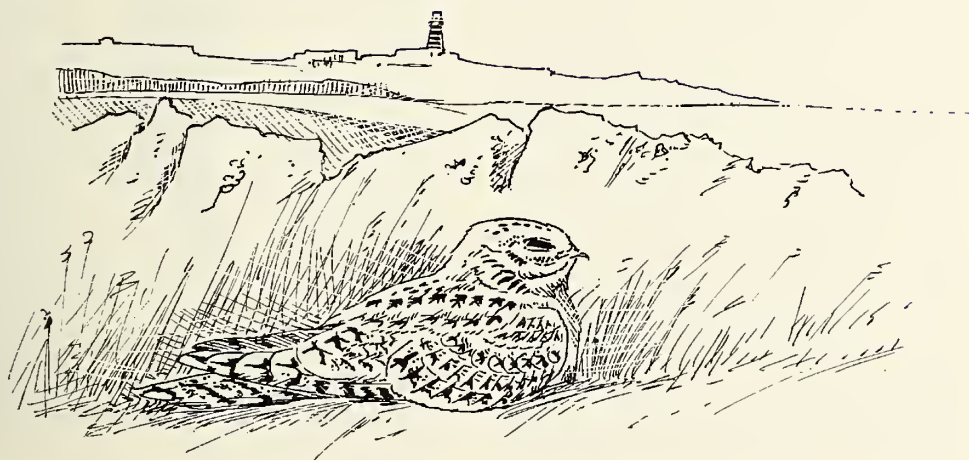
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO:

'Colin Bibby has for the last three years organised the Beached Bird Survey from the headquarters of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds at Sandy; but he has now returned to fieldwork. In January he began a three-year study of the Dartford Warbler, based on the Isle of Purbeck, Dorset ... Meanwhile, the RSPB's Beached Bird Survey will be continued by Miss Clare Lloyd ... who has studied seabirds (especially the Razorbill) on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire.'

(*Brit. Birds* 67: 129, March 1974)

EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR IN DORSET: THE SECOND BRITISH RECORD

GRAHAME WALBRIDGE



Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* (Dave Nurney)

ABSTRACT The first British record of Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was in Nottinghamshire on 23rd June 1883 (*Zoologist* (1883): 374). The only other accepted record in Britain and Ireland was in Dorset on 10th June 1984, over 100 years later. This paper documents the circumstances of the second occurrence.

At about 13.30 GMT on 10th June 1984, at Portland Bill, Dorset, I was walking through some rough pasture when I flushed what was obviously a very pale nightjar *Caprimulgus* from long grass right under my feet. During the next ten minutes or so, I flushed the bird on a further two occasions in bright sunlight. On the second occasion, it flew only a short distance, but I was unsuccessful in trying to obtain views of it on the ground. On the third and final occasion that it was flushed, the bird made several circuits of a large,

stony field before flying through a gap in a hedge. I watched it through 8x binoculars, on occasions as close as 30 m.

At this point I left, happy that the bird was an Egyptian Nightjar *C. aegyptius*, made several telephone calls and returned with several other observers within half an hour. Despite an exhaustive search of the area (somewhat hampered by the amount of long grass being grown for silage) during the rest of the daylight hours, and attempts to lure the bird to tape-recordings of the species, it was not relocated.

DESCRIPTION

UPPERPARTS: Head, mantle and rump a rather pale sandy-grey. No obvious markings noted (but this difficult to ascertain since the bird was not seen on the ground, and it rather took me by surprise on each occasion when it was flushed).

WINGS: Lesser, median, greater and greater primary coverts as upperparts. Primaries and secondaries noticeably darker, contrasting with rest of wing and upperparts; darkest on primaries, where barring was heaviest, lighter and less marked across secondaries towards tertials. No white visible in primaries. This resulted in contrast/pattern to the upperparts and wings somewhat recalling a female Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*.

TAIL: Coloration as upperparts, barred lightly with dark brown/black, most marked on outer part of tail, fading to centre. No white in tail. Tail long, and squarish ended.

UNDERPARTS: Mainly very pale sandy-grey, as upperparts, but a shade paler. Indistinct white throat patch and area around vent/undertail-coverts. Some faint barring visible on sides/flanks when bird seen at its closest point.

UNDERWING: From a distance, appeared wholly very pale, whitish with dark tip. Axillaries appeared white; rest of underwing off-white, with black around tip, and black barring from leading edge of wing, fading across tip.



Figures 1 & 2. Drawings of Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Dorset, June 1984 (Grahame Walbridge), part of the documentation submitted to the BBRC.



BARE PARTS: Bill barely visible, as with European Nightjar *C. europaeus*. Eye very obvious, large and black, standing out against pale plumage. Legs not seen.

CALL: The bird was silent.

FLIGHT/SILHOUETTE: Flight lazy and jinking, as European Nightjar, and fast. Bird appeared, however, to have longer and more-pointed wings than European Nightjar. Size difficult to judge, with nothing for comparison, but looked large, perhaps an illusion caused by the pallid appearance.

The bird's behaviour in flight was exactly as other nightjar species that I have seen (glides on upheld wings, etc.), but I did note one unusual feature when it was on the ground. At one point, I saw it land some distance away and approached cautiously, all the time trying to obtain views of the bird. I got right up to where it had landed (having marked the spot fairly accurately by the position of some stones), whereupon it 'got up' from some 3-5 m away, from behind some large thistles: it had obviously moved after alighting. I have never noted this behaviour by any other nightjars.

Grahame Walbridge, 17 Magennis House, Portland, Dorset DT5 2HR

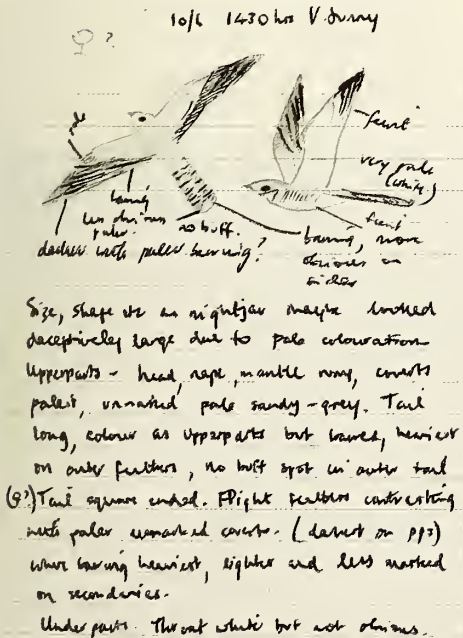
EDITORIAL COMMENT

Matters relevant to the record discussed during its circulations of the BBRC and the BOURC are outlined by the chairmen of the two committees.

Peter Lansdown (Chairman of the BBRC in 1988) has commented: 'The submission, which consisted of the circumstances of the sighting, the description and two sketches of the bird (figs. 1 & 2), received its first circulation of the BBRC from January to June 1985. This generated two votes to reject and eight "pend" votes (0: 2: 8). The dissenters both quoted, from the description, characters which, at the time, they mistakenly believed to be wrong for Egyptian Nightjar, and they (and others) quite properly raised the question of the appearance of a leucistic European Nightjar. The remaining voters expressed a wish to see the record again and there were various requests for it to be accompanied by the relevant extract from the then recently published volume 4 of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, copies of any published papers covering the Egyptian Nightjar records from Sweden in May 1972 and

Denmark in May and June 1983, the findings of a museum examination of Egyptian Nightjar, clarification of the precise appearance of the *unwini* race of European Nightjar and the views of other Committee members.

Following a skin check at the BBRC's meeting at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring in June 1985, the record, together with a copy of the paper detailing the record of Egyptian Nightjar in Sweden in May 1972 (*Vår Fågelvärld* 32: 34-39), began its recirculation in August 1985. During this recirculation, which was completed in August 1986, members added the relevant pages from BWP vol. 4, discussed the likely appearance of a leucistic European Nightjar and contributed details of their own observations of European Nightjar *C. e. unwini*. Although no BBRC member had had any experience of a leucistic European Nightjar, it was generally agreed that this pitfall could be disregarded because of the bird's strikingly contrasting plumage, in particular the barring across the upper surfaces of the flight-feathers and the underwing-tip pattern. It was also agreed that *unwini* was



Underparts pale grey/sandy. colour, lighter on vent, feebly barred on flanks. Underwing v. pale, whitest on axillaries. Black around tip of primaries with black barring from leading edge fading across wing tip. Eye, large, dark (obvious). No white spotting in or on wing. Flight as nightjar. When flushed had to stop on bird. On one occasion saw where it landed, but bird had moved nearly 20' from where I saw it land from behind some bristles.



Figure 3. Pages from Grahame Walbridge's field notebook, supplied to the BBRC in February 1988, with details of the Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Dorset, June 1984.

eliminated by the bird's pale undersides to its primaries, its uniformly pale upperwing-coverts and its overall pallid appearance. Four members voted to accept the record, while six requested further information (4: 0: 6). In addition to expressing concern over the bird's wing-shape and the colour of its primary coverts, three of the six felt that, for such an extraordinary record from a single observer, an observer profile should be assembled. The BBRC assesses all reports carefully, but is especially thorough when claims are by a small number of observers or, as in this case, a single observer. Wishful thinking and self-delusion are less likely when numbers of other, potentially critical observers have seen a bird, and the possibility of such over-optimism must be borne in mind by any assessment panel. Later voters on the recirculation responded to the plumage queries and provided a full discussion regarding the observer.

'The record was considered by the BBRC for the third time between September 1986 and June 1987. There were nine votes for acceptance with one for rejection (9: 1: 0). Even the out-of-step voter was quite favourably disposed towards the record, but felt that the short views and the lack of other observers made it less than certain considering the species' extreme rarity.

Indeed, he summed up "I'm sure now it was one but not totally proven." Other than on a record's first circulation, nine votes for acceptance translate to an overall decision by the BBRC to accept the record. Accordingly, as a record of potentially the first Egyptian Nightjar in Britain and Ireland for over 50 years (and therefore of a species then currently in Category B of the British and Irish List), the file was passed to the BOURC in July 1987 for that committee's assessment.

'During August and September 1987, the validity of the record was questioned three times. Two observers approached the BBRC's Chairman, one in the field and one by telephone, alleging that the final description of the bird was far more detailed than the notes made at and immediately following the sighting. The third communication was a typed, unsigned letter to the BBRC's Secretary; this also accused the observer of considerable embellishment of the original notes. The Committee abhors such anonymous accusations, but, as with information given to the police by informers, regards it as essential that the matter should be thoroughly investigated and the evidence considered objectively. Consequently, the BBRC requested the return of the file from the BOURC; fortunately, this was before the



28. Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Jahra Pool, Kuwait, May 1997 (Nigel Cleere)

record had started its circulation. In January 1988, the BBRC's Chairman wrote to the observer to acquaint him with the substance of the three separate approaches and to urge him to respond as rationally as possible to the allegations. An admirably constructive reply was received in February 1988. With it were two pages from the observer's field notebook containing the original descriptive notes and annotated sketches (fig. 3).

'All of this correspondence was added to the file and a fourth circulation of the BBRC took place from February to April 1988, during which a detailed comparison was made between the field notes and the submitted description. Nearly seven pages of comments were written by the BBRC members during this circulation, making a total of 17 pages of comprehensive discussion and opinion in all. The Committee concluded that the description and drawings were an honest account, without embellishment, of a bird seen relatively briefly in circumstances that did not allow every tiny plumage detail to be noted. The record was accepted unanimously (10:0:0) (*Brit. Birds* 84: 478).'

Tony Marr (current Chairman of the BOURC) has commented: 'The file was first received from the BBRC in July 1987, but as described above was returned to them before it had started its circulation. When subsequently received, it was circulated between June 1990 and February 1991. The BOURC considered all the assembled evidence and new information on other relevant matters.

'To the usual two principal considerations for a first record for Category A, identification and origin, had to be added a third, that of the honesty and reputation of the single observer. Observer credibility is always in Committee members' minds in assessing any such record, but with a single observer it naturally assumes a greater significance. In this instance, the three allegations by other observers that the original description had been embellished placed this issue firmly in the forefront of members' minds.

'There was no problem with the identification. The BBRC had covered this very thoroughly, and BOURC members agreed that the description rang true with its feeling of immediacy, its convincing detail and its palpable honesty. Any question of observer error was quickly dismissed.

'Neither was there any real problem with the origin of a South Coast record in late spring; in a likely locality for a bird overshooting on migration; and with several previous European spring records, mostly along the Mediterranean coast, but with one as close as Denmark just one year before.

'On the question of observer credibility, there was unequivocal and unanimous support for the reliability and integrity of the observer, and nothing but scorn or what one member described as "the unsubstantiated and illiterate allegations of an anonymous observer". Another suggested that these were the product of "a bitter and jealous mind". Several commented on this insight into a particularly unattractive aspect of the twitching scene.

'Ironically, rather than sink the record, the accusations appear to have helped it to gain acceptance, as they generated an even more detailed investigation than would normally be expected.

'Thus it was that, after some seven years of consideration, investigation and deliberation by the two committees, the record was finally unanimously accepted and the species was upgraded from Category B to Category A on the British List (*Ibis* 133: 439).

'Never let it be said that the BBRC-BOURC vetting system leads to ill-considered or hasty decisions.'

The last three years of the assessment process, in particular, cannot have been an easy time for the observer whose integrity had been impugned. Eventually, however, Grahame Walbridge's name was completely cleared of the allegations against him. Indeed, as an example of the high regard in which he was (and is) held by his peers, this is just one quotation from the BBRC circulations of the many testaments of support contained therein: 'I regard Grahame

as perhaps the best field observer I know.' Another member commented that 'People with exceptional field ability do attract criticism from their inferiors, who do not realise that they are inferiors, or will never admit it even to themselves.'

IDENTIFICATION OF EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR

NIGEL CLEERE

The Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* is a migratory species that occurs in only a few places in the southernmost parts of the Western Palearctic. In the southeast of the region, the nominate race occasionally breeds or has bred in countries such as Israel and Jordan, although it is more likely to occur as a passage migrant en route to its Asian breeding grounds farther to the northeast. In the southwest, the slightly smaller birds of the race *C. a. saharae* breed primarily in sandy, semi-desert country in central and eastern Morocco, northern and occasionally southern Algeria, central Tunisia and possibly also in northwestern Libya. The wintering grounds of all populations generally lie in sub-Saharan Africa, but do not extend as far south as the forest zone. As with many migratory birds, the Egyptian Nightjar is occasionally subject to vagrancy, and in western parts of the Western Palearctic those encountered beyond their normal range are likely to belong to the Northwest African breeding population, *C. a. saharae*.

Identification

The Egyptian Nightjar is a medium-sized to large, sandy-grey nightjar and is, by far, the palest of those breeding in the Western Palearctic. It is sexually dimorphic, but not greatly so. At rest, it often appears large headed, and its wing tips fall slightly short of the tip of the tail. The forehead, crown and nape are sandy-grey, spotted blackish-brown, these markings sparse on some individuals, but bolder on others. It has an indistinct buffish supercilium, often evident only behind the eye, sandy-grey or greyish-buff lores and ear-coverts, buffish-white submoustachial stripe and indistinct buffish hindneck collar. The rest of the upperparts are sandy-grey, lightly speckled and vermiculated brown. The wing-coverts are sandy-grey, streaked, speckled and vermiculated brown and blackish-brown, boldly spotted buff; the scapulars are boldly marked with blackish-brown 'bat' or T-shaped markings. The tail is sandy-grey, mottled and barred brown. The chin and throat are whitish or buffish, barred brown, but a white patch on the lower throat is often obscured. The breast is sandy-grey, spotted buff and lightly barred brown. The belly, flanks, underwing-coverts and undertail-coverts (obviously not visible on a resting bird) are buff, barred brown.

In flight, the upperwing usually lacks white spots, and the brown primaries contrast strongly with the rest of the wing,



Figures 4 & 5. Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* (Dave Nurney), from *Nightjars: A Guide to Nightjars and Related Nightbirds* by Nigel Cleere (Pica Press).

which is generally sandy-grey. Note, however, that the primaries are not entirely brown, but are boldly scalloped white along the inner webs and, very rarely, the outermost scallop on one of the three outer primaries may extend across onto the outer web of the feather, and this may show as a small white wing spot if the bird is seen well. The underwing generally appears much paler with less of a contrast, owing to the white scalloping and the buffish underwing-coverts. The male has the two outer tail feathers tipped buffish-white; the female has narrower, buffier markings; but, on either sex, these tail spots may not always be noticeable.



Comparison with other Western Palearctic species

In the west of the region, there are two other breeding species, Red-necked Nightjar *C. ruficollis* and the more widespread European Nightjar *C. europaeus*, both of which are darker and more greyish-brown. The Red-necked Nightjar is much larger, has a broad reddish collar around the hindneck, bolder buffish spots on the wing-coverts, and both sexes show white spots on the outer primaries and tail feathers, although the markings are slightly smaller on females. Its large size can also, at times, make it appear less buoyant in flight. The European Nightjar is similar in size to Egyptian Nightjar, although birds of the southern race *C. e. meridionalis* are on average smaller. At rest, it always shows bolder buffish spots on the lower wing-coverts, a distinct buffish line along the median coverts and plainer, browner lesser coverts. In flight, males show white spots on the outer primaries and

tail feathers; females and immatures lack white markings, but are browner and plainer than Egyptian Nightjar and lack a strong contrast in the upperwing pattern. Egyptian Nightjar also appears longer and broader winged than European Nightjar and, if flushed during the day, often flies around in a more leisurely fashion, taking its time in looking for a new roost site.

The Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* is a vagrant, greyish-brown nightjar from North America that occasionally turns up in western Europe during the autumn. At rest, it often appears small-headed, its wing tips extend beyond the tip of the tail, and the broad white band across the outer primaries is often visible. In flight, it has thinner wings, more pointed wing tips and a slightly forked tail. Both sexes, at all ages, show a broad white band across the outer primaries and white or very pale throat patches. Adult males also show a white subterminal band on all but the central pair of tail feathers, although this may be less noticeable if the tail is closed.

In the southeast of the region, the Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus* is smaller and greyer, shorter-winged and shorter-tailed, and both sexes show bold white spots on the outer primaries and tail feathers. Two pale, eastern races of European Nightjar may also be encountered in this region, especially during migration periods. *C. e. unwini* is always much greyer than Egyptian Nightjar and is never sandy-grey, but *C. e. plumipes* is a sandy-coloured, desert form which may cause some confusion at times. If seen well, however, the differences described above should separate the majority of individuals. It should also be noted that these eastern forms of European Nightjar are highly unlikely to occur in western parts of the Western Palearctic.

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THE BEST ANNUAL BIRD REPORT AWARDS



This is the eighth year in which this Award has been presented. The criteria on which county and regional bird reports are judged have been honed over the years, the latest amendment being that those published within 12 months of the end of the period covered shall receive a 5-points bonus (rather than those which are published later than this being ineligible). For the first time, therefore, this year's rules allowed submission of all reports published within the 12-month period January-December 1998. As a result, some counties had two eligible reports. We feel that this is a fairer system and are grateful to the members of the Association of County Recorders and Editors whose suggestions, published in *newsACRE*, have helped to improve these annual assessments.

The general standard is now very high. A mere 20% separated the top report from that in thirty-fourth position. The winner this year is – for the fifth time! – **Essex**, with 91% (and the contents of that county's 1996 report achieved the same score, but,

without the 5-points bonus, came seventh). **Norfolk**, a previous joint winner in 1997 (with its 1995 report), was second this year and **Avon**, also joint winner in 1997, was in third place, for the third successive year (see table 1). [We apologise to Andy Davis, Editor of the Avon Bird Report, Harvey Rose, Recorder for Avon, and to our readers for the incorrect listing of previous placings in the judging for this Award. The Avon Bird Report came equal third in both 1995 and 1996 (not unplaced and equal fifth). The full record for 1990-97 for Avon should read: –, 5, 9, –, 1, 3, 3, 3.]

Fife was top of the reports produced by medium-sized local societies, in a very creditable fourth position, equal with **London**: contrast the resources of the Fife Bird Club (211 members at the start of 1997, growing to 314 by the end of the year) with those of the London Natural History Society (1,169 members). The achievement of the 'under ten resident birders' in the **Outer Hebrides** is even more remarkable, with their *Outer Hebrides (Western Isles) Bird Report 1997 (with 1992-1996 additions)*

storming into top spot for small-membership publications (those with fewer than 200 members) when it does not even have a local club or society.

There was some improvement in the standard of some bird-observatory reports (headed by **Fair Isle**, in joint thirty-second position, on 60%), but we do once again suggest that editors and their committees could gain much by perusing reports such as those for Essex, Norfolk and Avon, while those for Fife and the Outer Hebrides demonstrate what can be achieved even with more-limited resources (in both manpower and funds). We do look forward

to the day when a bird-observatory report wins this annual award ...

Any county or regional report editor or recorder who would like to see a photocopy of the full results should send a request with a SAE to the address below:

J. T. R. Sharrock (*British Birds*), **Robert Gillmor** (Society of Wildlife Artists), **John Martin** (British Birds Rarities Committee), **Derek Moore** (British Trust for Ornithology) and **Michael J. Rogers** (Association of County Recorders and Editors), all c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Table 1. The top ten annual bird reports published in 1998.

Position	County (and year if not 1997)	Editors	Score
1st	Essex	A. Goodey & S. J. Grimwade	91%
2nd	Norfolk	Michael J. Seago	89%
3rd	Avon	A. H. Davis	88%
4th =	Fife	David S. Fotheringham	87%
4th =	London	A. V. Moon	87%
6th	Suffolk	Gary Lowe	86%
7th	Essex (1996)	A. Goodey & S. J. Grimwade	85%
8th	Sussex	L. G. Holloway	84%
9th =	Cheshire & Wirral	D. J. Steventon	81%
9th =	Nottinghamshire	Bernie Ellis	81%

Fife was 1st in the category covering medium-sized societies (200-400 members) and *Outer Hebrides* (edited by Brian Rabbitts, and achieving a score of 78%) was 1st in the category covering small societies (fewer than 200 members). The top bird-observatory report was *Fair Isle* (edited by Roger Riddington, and achieving a score of 60%).

The year's best reports can be obtained as follows:

ESSEX Maurice Adcock, 53 Victoria Drive, Great Wakering, Southend-on-Sea SS3 0AT (£8.00 incl. p&p)

NORFOLK David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6LT (£8.00 incl. p&p)

AVON Dr H. E. Rose, c/o 12 Birbeck Road, Bristol BS9 1BD (£5.00 incl. p&p)

FIFE D. E. Dickson, 2 Burrelton Court, Bankhead, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 4UN (£4.99 incl. p&p)

LONDON Mrs C. Schmitt, 4 Faulkland Avenue, London N3 1QR (£7.00 incl. p&p)

SUFFOLK Suffolk Naturalists' Society, The Museum, High Street, Ipswich IP1 3QH

(£9.00 incl. p&p)

SUSSEX John Trowell, Lorrimer, Main Road, Icklesham, Winchelsea, East Sussex TN36 4BS £7.00 (incl. p&p)

CHESHIRE & WIRRAL Keith S. Sheel, 11 Bridgecroft Road, Wallasey, Wirral L45 7NX (£5.00)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Kevin Tomlinson, 20 Jackson Avenue, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8AD (£6.75 incl. p&p)

OUTER HEBRIDES Brian Rabbitts, 6 Carinish, Lochmaddy, North Uist HS6 5HL (£4.00 incl. p&p)

FAIR ISLE Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle Shetland ZE2 9JU (£6.00 incl. p&p)



NOTES

BLACK STORK WITH WHITE TAIL

On 11th June 1998, there were about five Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* present at Dolna Kula, Bulgaria, where the species breeds. One of the storks had completely white tail-feathers, except for the middle ones (probably the two middle ones) which were black. This created a very striking pattern from above, while the tail was entirely white from underneath. The rectrices did not appear worn. (The observation was made through a 30x telescope at a distance of perhaps 200-300 m on a clear day with the sun behind my back.)

Perhaps I would not have thought twice about this – partial albinism is not infrequent – if it were not for a note in *British Birds* (73: 104), which reported one Black Stork with a completely white tail and two with white tails apart from black central tail-feathers. These observations were also made in the Balkans, in Yugoslavia and Greece.

A letter (*Brit. Birds* 75: 93) subsequently proposed that the rectrices were perhaps not actually white, but just stained by faeces. Jan Olsson's (one of the original observers) comment (verbally) to this suggestion is not printable. Likewise, the rectrices of the Bulgarian bird were not stained – they were white.

Perhaps there is some truth in the speculation of the original observers, that this aberrant tail pattern is the result of a locally common recessive gene?

Magnus Ullman

Iliongr. K: 104, S-224 71 Lund, Sweden

PLUMAGE VARIATION OF GREAT SKUA

On 17th July 1996, at a colony of Great Skuas *Catharacta skua* at Ingolfshöfði, Iceland, I observed an unusually pale individual accompanied by a more normal dark adult (plates 29 & 30). Although Great Skuas, unlike the smaller *Stercorarius*

species, do not exhibit polymorphism, many are either darker or paler than those depicted in most field guides. Although a pale adult South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki* can never be excluded (Bourne & Curtis 1994), such a bird should show pale tips to the scapulars and the upperwing-coverts (Lansdown 1993a, b). As pointed out by Furness (1987), Great Skuas show 'a high degree of individual variation of a continuous nature'. The photographs demonstrate just how great this variation can be, and this should be borne in mind when considering the identification of South Polar Skua.

F. L. L. Tombeur

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The members of the Identification Notes Panel commented at some length on this, and a summary of their views follows. Prof. Colin Bradshaw considered that 'This bird is a pale adult [Great Skua], as more or less confirmed by shaft streaks on nape...', while Rob Hume wondered '...is it really extreme variation or is it perhaps bleached, or even a leucistic bird rather than a "genuine" pale extreme?'. Peter Lansdown thought: 'This is well worth an airing... It's certainly a Great Skua, not a South Polar Skua, and probably an adult. I would echo [Rob Hume's] query concerning the cause of its appearance...'. Tim Inskipp, while agreeing that the pale individual was not a South Polar Skua, felt that it did 'show structural differences from the other bird – smaller, narrower bill, smaller head and



29 & 30. Normal and unusually pale Great Skuas *Catharacta skua*, Iceland, July 1996 (F. L. L. Tombeur)

bigger eye which could suggest SPS in flight view. Also appears to show a pale ring around the base of the bill – a feature I thought was confined to SPS.' Keith Vinicombe, however, wrote: 'I'd be very wary of making size and structural estimates from these photos. If it is smaller, then [this] may just be a sexual [difference]. To me, this looks like a leucistic bird...', an opinion echoed by Steve Madge: 'Publish as a warning that such birds do exist. Surely it is a leucistic

bird, which makes it quite an "eye-opener".' Iain Robertson stated: 'I have seen birds as pale as this in Shetland colonies and every shade in between; also [in Shetland] some individuals with pale feathering at base of bill – though unusual. To me this is just an extremely pale individual, possibly leucistic, adult.' Clearly, observers need to be aware of the existence of such pale-looking Great Skuas, which are generally not mentioned in the literature.



LETTERS

BREEDING RANGE OF DARK-THROATED THRUSH

In the editorial comment following the paper on the occurrence of a Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of the red-throated race *ruficollis* in Essex (Smith *et al.* 1999), the range of the black-throated race *atrogularis* is said by Tony Marr, Chairman of the BOURC, to include the Caucasus. I believe this to be the perpetuation of an error: the map in *BWP* vol. 5 for this species (Cramp 1988: 972) indeed shows breeding in Armenia and Azerbaijan (strictly, Transcaucasia), but, on first seeing this map in the published volume, I considered that an indication of breeding in that area was almost certainly erroneous and Dr L. S. Stepanyan of the Institute of Ecology and Evolution in Moscow later confirmed this (*in litt.*). Furthermore, claims of breeding *atrogularis* there (and in northeast Iran)

were dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration pending definite proof, and 'ecologically incredible' by Glutz & Bauer (1988). The list of corrections in *BWP* vol. 6 (Cramp 1992) subsequently stated (p.723) that both areas of breeding west of the Caspian Sea should be **deleted**. Although only a World map was included for *T. ruficollis* (as a marginal West Palearctic breeder) in the *Concise BWP* (Snow & Perrins 1998), this consequently shows no breeding, only wintering in the area concerned, as does the map in Beaman & Madge (1998). In contrast, the map certainly, and presumably also the text with its reference to 'small isolated populations in Armenia and Azerbaijan', in Hagemeyer & Blair (1997), derives from *BWP* vol. 5 and thus did not take into account the correction referred to above.

For Armenia, the status of Dark-throated

Thrush (*atroregularis*) has recently been described as 'rare migrant' (Adamian & Klem 1997), while information on Azerbaijan supplied by M. Patrikeev for the *Concise BWP* shows the species to be a common migrant and winter visitor there (abundant in some years in the southeast). Importantly, there is no suggestion that Dark-throated Thrush breeds (or has bred) in either of these Transcaucasian republics.

The Western Palearctic breeding range of *atroregularis* is hence restricted to a relatively narrow belt in the Middle and Northern Urals, including their western foothills (Cramp 1988; Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). There have also been frequent sightings, but no confirmed breeding, in the valleys of the Pechora and its tributaries, the Izhma and Tsil'ma, farther west in northern European Russia (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

I am grateful to Dr D. W. Snow for reading through an earlier draft of this letter and encouraging me to submit it for publication. I also thank Peter Clement for sending me the relevant distribution text from his forthcoming *Thrushes: an identification handbook to the thrushes of the World*.

M. G. Wilson, Alexander Library, EGI, Zoology Department, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS

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THE MAASVLAKTE WARBLER

There is no doubt in my mind that the mystery warbler caught and photographed at Maasvlakte, Rotterdam, Netherlands, on 3rd May 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 190-191, plates 56-62) was a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. The so-called large eye is an unreliable subjective feature, not supported by any standard measurements, and in my opinion not striking at all. If anything, the size of the eye may be over-emphasised by the well-marked head-pattern. This pattern is typical of Willow Warbler: the combination of a dark eye-stripe, dark lores, contrastingly pale supercilium and slightly mottled ear-coverts do not fit any *Hippolais*. The pale tips and spikes on the inner primaries equally support the identification as a *Phylloscopus*. Furthermore, the photographs seem to show much more olive in the plumage than one would expect in any of the small *Hippolais*. Last, but not least, the identification as a Willow Warbler is fully supported by all details of the wing-formula and measurements.

The bird is too short-winged for *P. t. yakutensis*. Only extremely large male Willow Warblers can safely be attributed to the race *acredula*, and this short-winged individual could equally be a colour variant of the nominate subspecies.

Gunter De Smet
(Chairman of Belgian rarities committee)
Edmond Blockstraat 9, B-9050 Gentbrugge,
Belgium

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We received several other written and verbal responses reaching the same conclusion, and, in a circulation during October 1998 to January 1999, the six members of the Identification Notes Panel also concurred with Gunter De Smet's identification of this bird as a Willow Warbler.



NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY BOB SCOTT AND WENDY DICKSON

Securing the future for wildlife on Appleby Fells

One of Europe's most important wildlife sites, Appleby Fells, which has suffered damage from overgrazing, is to benefit from a partnership between English Nature and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) as they join forces to look at ways of halting further deterioration and improving its wildlife management. This nearly 3,400 ha of Pennine Upland consists of a scarp slope of deeply dissected valleys, topped by a large tract of blanket bog. First notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1951, the site is of international importance

under the European Habitats Directive for its range of habitats including upland heath, blanket bog, limestone grasslands, woodland and open water, while its breeding birds, which include European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Merlin *Falco columbarius*, qualify it for recognition as a Special Protection Area (for birds). It is hoped that reducing sheep numbers will allow damaged vegetation to recover naturally or with some remedial habitat-management work.

Escaped Purple Swamp-hens

In 1998, a Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in Cambridgeshire attracted considerable attention from the birding community until it was discovered that it had escaped from a local wildlife park. This was nothing compared with recent events in Florida. The Miami MetroZoo boasted a 'Wings of Asia' exhibit that contained several breeding Purple Swamp-hens. In August 1992, the aviary containing

the birds was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew and some of the birds were known to have escaped into the wild. By 1998, a well-established population was estimated at over 80 individuals on a lake near Pembroke Pines, Florida, with others possibly established elsewhere in the area. The Purple Swamp-hen is clearly yet another 'exotic' species that has been added to the Florida avifauna.

Spain's first urban bird atlas

During 1996-98, the four-year-old Societat Valenciana d'Ornitologia has undertaken an atlas project on the wintering and breeding birds of Valencia city and its surroundings, a study area of 73 km². Partly due to its habitat diversity, embracing the city with its harbour and remains of the mouth of the river Turia as well as orange

groves and horticultural fields on the outskirts, the results have surprised even the local ornithologists, with 82 wintering and 72 confirmed or probable breeding species. Further details of the project can be obtained from Enrique Murgui, Societat Valenciana d'Ornitologia, G. V. Marques del Turia 28, 46005 Valencia, Spain.

Magpies and Sparrowhawks let off the hook

New research by the BTO and the RSPB has confirmed that Britain's declines in songbird populations are not the result of increased populations of the Magpie *Pica pica* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. Data collected since 1962 in the BTO's annual Common Birds Census, when subjected to rigorous

statistical analysis to see whether national population changes in 23 songbird species reflected changing Magpie and Eurasian Sparrowhawk numbers, established that there is no link. Comparing population changes between areas with and without these predators showed no difference. The authors conclude that, with increasing evidence that songbird declines are a feature of farmland habitats, future research should focus on effects of intensified farming rather than blaming predators for the declines.



REVIEW

Atlas de las Aves de España (1975-1995)

Edited by Francisco J. Purroy.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 1997.

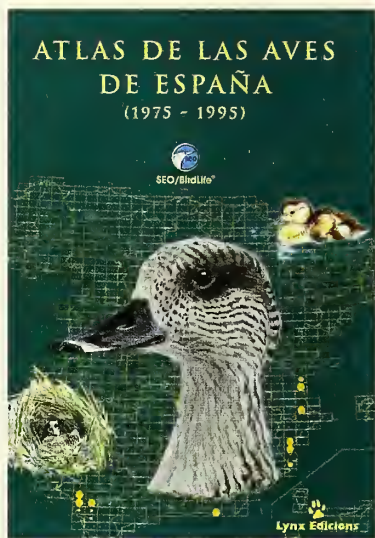
583 pages; 262 maps & 271 line-drawings.

ISBN 84-87334-11-3. £24.00.

Covering mainland Spain, the Balearics and the Canary Islands, this impressive work has been a long time in the making. The survey was launched by the Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO) in 1976, the first of 20 seasons of fieldwork. Just 300 or so volunteer birdwatchers achieved good coverage of all but 146 of the 1,350 survey units, each about 18.5 x 27–30 km.

The bulk of the book comprises 262 species accounts, each with a double-page spread and an attractive vignette. Maps use the three dot sizes for proved, probable and possible breeding. The text has sections on distribution (World and Spanish), breeding habitat, population, changes in distribution or abundance, migratory status in Spain, conservation problems and references. A further 23 very rare species are covered briefly and not mapped.

Relating species distributions to habitats or topographical features requires either a good knowledge of Spanish (which I lack) or reference to botanical texts. There are no



overlays and only a basic relief map in the brief introduction. Thus, it is not obvious, for example, without reading the text, that Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* has expanded strongly to the north in recent decades. There are several surprises – for example, over 100 pairs of Garganeys *Anas querquedula* (compare with BWP) and 1,000 pairs of Black-shouldered Kites *Elanus caeruleus*. The book is packed with interest for anyone fascinated by Spain's birds and will be an important tool for Spanish conservationists for years to come.

I am grateful to Dawn Lawrence for translation assistance.

JOHN MARTIN





MONTHLY MARATHON

January's streaky passerine (*Brit. Birds* 91: plate 7, repeated here as plate 31) was named as Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (5%), Lesser Short-toed Lark *C. rufescens* (5%), Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* (81%), Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (3%), Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii* (2%) and Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis* (4%). The majority view was correct: this Sky Lark was photographed by Graham Bell in Co. Durham in April 1995.

The leader of the pack, ex-BBRC Chairman Peter Lansdown, identified this one and moves on to eight correct answers in a row. The identification is discussed below by Paul Holt.

From the robust upright stance, the heavy upperpart streaking, the rather plain wings with non-contrasting lesser and median coverts and the stout pinkish legs we can deduce that the bird is clearly a lark of the genus *Galerida*, Lulla or *Alauda*. *Galerida* can be ruled out as our bird appears slimmer-bellied and proportionately longer-tailed than either Crested *G. cristata* or Thekla Lark *G. theklae*. In addition, it is perhaps too heavily streaked on the crown, mantle and scapulars, and too extensively streaked on the nape. The rather long tail appears fairly

uniform and, apart from apparently having white on the outermost tail feather, has only subtly paler central ones.

The bird's tail is also too long for Wood Lark *L. arborea* and there is no sign of that species' diagnostic carpal pattern of white-tipped black primary coverts and alula. The hind neck is also too heavily streaked, and the supercilia certainly do not reach the nape. The mystery bird's primary projection, a critical feature, is also too long. Razo Lark *A. razae* has tertials that completely cloak the primaries and a short tail that, in combination, should impart an ungainly front-heavy jizz.

This leaves us with Sky Lark *A. arvensis* and Oriental Lark *A. gulgula*. Despite having very heavily abraded tertials, the mystery bird obviously has a long primary projection with two well-spaced primary tips clearly visible beyond the longest tertial. This, combined with the aforementioned tail length and pattern, would mean that the mystery bird is a Sky Lark.

PAUL HOLT

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31. Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Co. Durham, April 1995 (Graham Bell)



32. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 151. Twelfth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1999.

RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rareities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* Nanjizal (Cornwall), 5th November to 1999. **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* Slapton Ley (Devon), 21st-31st March. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* Wath Ings (South Yorkshire), 15th-16th June. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Potteric Carr (South Yorkshire), 28th April; Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire), 29th August to 12th September. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Gringley Carr (Nottinghamshire), 5th-15th November. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Chichester Gravel-pits (West Sussex), 19th-21st September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Rattray Head (Northeast Scotland), 3rd-4th June. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Elmley (Kent), 16th August; Great Wakering (Essex), 21st-23rd September. **Laughing Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir (Gower), 28th October to 1st November. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Elmley, 25th May, then Herne Bay and Seasalter area, 30th May to 20th June; Musselburgh (Lothian), 17th August and 9th September. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* East Tilbury (Essex), 26th

July. **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* St Agnes (Scilly), 9th-13th September, dead 14th; St Mary's (Scilly), 13th-21st September. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle (Shetland) 24th-26th September; 1st-6th October. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Girdleness (Northeast Scotland), 22nd-25th September. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 2nd-5th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* Winspit (Dorset), 16th May. **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* Ormiston Hall (Lothian), 12th October; North Tolsta (Outer Hebrides), 14th-26th October. **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* St Agnes, 24th September to 8th October. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Balemartine, Tiree (Argyll), 20th September. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Eccles-on-Sea (Norfolk), 29th September. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Two Tree Island (Essex), 13th May.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

This summary of unchecked reports covers 12th January to 7th February 1999. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Long-stayer throughout period at Rostellan (Co. Cork); long-stayer on Tresco (Scilly), until at least 2nd February; Llangorse Lake (Powys), 16th January to at least 7th February. **Magnificent Frigatebird** *Fregata magnificens* Isle of Man, 22nd December, taken into care. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Martin Mere (Lancashire), 25th January to at least 7th February; Ovingdean (East Sussex), 26th January to at least 7th February; Whalsay Ferry (Shetland), 27th January, taken into care. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Blanket Nook (Co. Donegal),

7th February. **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* Nearctic race *carolinensis*: at least four in Ireland, in Co. Antrim, Co. Cork, Co. Dublin and Co. Wexford. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Barrow Harbour (Co. Kerry), throughout period. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Stodmarsh (Kent), 31st January. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Stenness (Orkney), 21st January. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* Cliffs of Moher (Co. Clare), 20th January. **Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides* 'Kumlien's Gull' *L. g. kunlieni*: adult, Newport Dump (Co. Mayo), 23rd January; two adults, Burtonport (Co. Donegal), 24th January; second-winter, The Lough (Co. Cork), 6th February. **Thayer's Gull** *Larus (glaucoides) thayeri* Two first-winters, Newport Dump, 23rd January, one still present on 2nd February.



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33. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Strathclyde CP, Lanarkshire, January 1999 (Mark Darling)



34. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Tynemouth, December 1998 (Brian Clasper)



RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS

ADAM ROWLANDS JOINS THE BBRC

Pete Ellis retires from the BBRC on 31st March 1999. He has served on the Committee since 1991 and will, no doubt, enjoy his well-earned rest. Pete will be missed as he brought to the assessment of records the twin strengths of an excellent field observer and a man with considerable experience of birds in the hand. Despite working for the Rarities Committee, he has maintained an enviable track record of finding rare birds in Shetland. We have no doubt that he will continue to keep in touch with the Committee, not least through a continuing supply of excellent descriptions, and we wish him well.

The new member of the BBRC is Adam Rowlands, from Kent. He was the BBRC nominee from last year and has been elected unopposed.

Adam has been birding for 18 years and has mainly been associated with Kent, where he serves on the Kent Ornithological Society's Rarities Sub-committee. He works at the Elmley RSPB Reserve on the Isle of Sheppey. He has travelled extensively in Asia

as well as in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and North America, studying the identification of birds which are, or could be, vagrants to Britain.

He is perhaps best known for his part in the identification of the Reculver Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (in November-December 1994), but he has found many other British rarities including Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*. His other claims to fame include the first accepted records of Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* in Greece and Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* in Cyprus.

We are delighted that Adam is joining us, but, once again, slightly disappointed that no-one else was put forward for consideration. We would prefer elections every year, as this would allow birders to have a say in who assesses (and so, ultimately, how we assess) records. Anyone who would be interested in being on the BBRC can contact me for more information.

Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth,
Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



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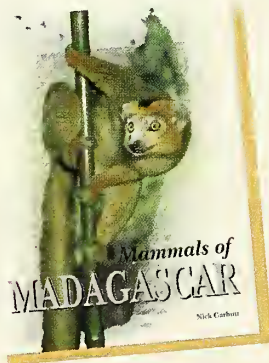
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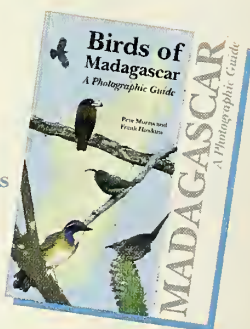
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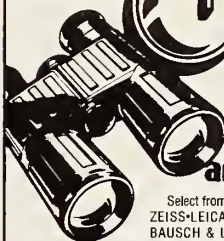
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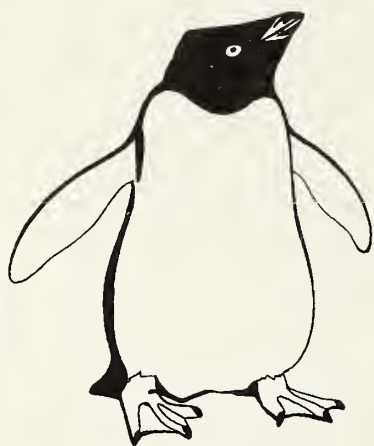


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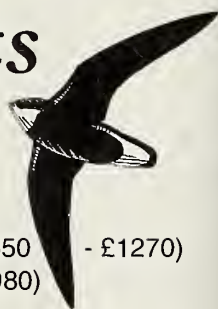
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BIRDS IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE – A CAUSE FOR OPTIMISM?

Since human beings first started to clear Britain's native forests almost 5,000 years ago, we have had a profound effect on our environment and its ability to support birds. The destruction and degradation of habitats has continued into the present century, resulting in drastic reductions in the populations of species as diverse as Black Grouse *Tetrao urogallus*, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos*, Corn Crane *Crex crex* and Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*. Deliberate persecution, often in the name of preserving gamebirds for shooting, has also had widespread and dramatic effects on our avifauna, leading to the loss from large parts of Britain of once familiar species such as Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Raven *Corvus corax*. Even during the last few decades we have seen alarmingly rapid declines in the populations of many of our typical farmland birds, thought to be attributable mainly to the intensification of farming methods. More than 70% of our Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, and almost 90% of our Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* have been lost since 1970. Yet, at a time when our potential impacts on birds are probably greater than ever, the number of mechanisms available to help redress the balance is increasing.

In 1994, following the Rio Earth Summit, the Government published the UK's first ever Biodiversity Action Plan, with a commitment to 'conserve and where practicable enhance species and wildlife habitats.' A total of 26 birds is

highlighted in the plan as priority species, and this includes many of the wider countryside species currently in decline. Fully costed action plans have already been published for all but one of these species, setting out the conservation measures necessary to reverse the declines and ambitious conservation targets to aim for. The Song Thrush plan, for example, includes a commitment to:

1. 'Halt the decline in numbers of Song Thrush in the UK by the year 2000.'
2. 'Maintain the range and population levels of Song Thrush, and where possible restore them to that of the 1997 estimate.'
3. 'Identify and implement priority research in order to formulate future conservation action.'

The work outlined in such plans will be carried out by a range of both voluntary and statutory conservation bodies, sometimes in partnership with private companies.

More money than ever before is now being diverted away from subsidies designed to increase the amount of food we produce, into more environmentally friendly ways of farming, although it remains only a tiny fraction of the total agricultural budget. Schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Countryside Stewardship and the introduction of set-aside should all help to make our countryside more bird-friendly and often include prescriptions specifically targeted at threatened or declining species. It is to be hoped that the current review of the EU Common

Agricultural Policy (the so called 'Agenda 2000' proposals) will result in a further switch of funds into this type of scheme.

In most cases, the fortunes of declining species will be improved only by working to improve the condition or extent of habitats available. In a few cases, however, species have been wiped out by past persecution and have been unable to recolonise naturally, despite the availability of suitable habitat. It is here that re-introduction can play its part, and we have already seen what can be achieved with projects involving the White-tailed Eagle and the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. A more recent project aims to restore the Osprey to its rightful place in the English countryside and, in

the future, similar techniques could be used for other species, once conservation work has restored sufficient areas of suitable habitat.

Given the decline seen in many of our most familiar species, it is understandable that many people are pessimistic about the current state of our nation's birds. However, while a great deal remains to be done, at least work is now under way to begin the process of putting things right. For the first time in many, many years, we can look into the future with the prospect of a more diverse and bird-rich countryside than we are currently able to enjoy.

IAN CARTER



LOOKING BACK



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO:

'It cannot be denied that Genera and Species are merely "convenient bundles," and that divisions of either, if carried too far, defeat the object for which Classification is intended. Genera are only more distinct from Species, and Species from Races, because the intervening links have disappeared; and, if we could have before us the complete series which, according to the doctrine of Evolution, has at some time existed, neither Genus nor Species would be capable of definition, any more than are Races in many cases; while the same remark will apply to the larger groups.'

(*Zoologist* 3 (fourth series): 187, April 1899)

FIFTY YEARS AGO:

'The British Trust for Ornithology Hatching and Fledging Cards, now called Nest Record Cards, were originally designed by Dr Julian Huxley and Mr. James Fisher.

Members of the Trust are asked to complete a card for every nest of every species that they find, giving details of locality, situation, number of eggs, young, etc., with dates ... This method of enquiry represents a valuable advance in field ornithological technique.'

(*Brit. Birds* 42: 97, April 1949)

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO:

'As forecast in this feature, the new Labour Government has stopped all preparatory work on the proposed Maplin Airport, [as] promised at the last election. Conservationists are likely to be divided in opinion on what ought to happen to Foulness Island now. I should be quite happy to see a continuance of the military presence which has preserved the island from major development for the last four decades.'

(*Brit. Birds* 67: 174, April 1974)

NON-NATIVE BIRDS BREEDING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1996

MALCOLM OGILVIE AND THE RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL



Golden Pheasants *Chrysolophus picta* (Dan Powell)

From 1996, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel enlarged the list of species that it deals with to take in all those on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 instead of only those which were considered to be less common. At the same time, it was realised that the Panel, with its connections to the entire network of local bird recorders, was also ideally placed to monitor the scarcer introduced and naturalised non-native species. The need for such monitoring was one of the main conclusions of the joint BOU/JNCC conference on introduced and naturalised birds in the UK held in 1995 (Holmes & Simons 1996; Marchant 1996).

As explained by Ogilvie (1997), non-native species, whether the result of escapes from captivity or of deliberate introduction, can cause serious problems, for example to indigenous species or to agriculture, throughout the World. Britain has not been free from such problems, with Canada

Goose *Branta canadensis* an obvious example, while escaped Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* have spread from Britain to Spain and caused problems for native White-headed Ducks *O. leucocephala* there.

Almost 300 species of non-native birds have been reported in the wild in Britain and about one-sixth of these have been recorded as having bred in the wild (BOURC 1998; Holmes *et al.* 1998). Many species that escape never find a mate, however, or fail to find the correct habitat, food or climatic conditions to breed successfully. Those that do have the potential to acquire the status of pests and can cause significant economic and nature conservation impacts. This new initiative by the Panel will, with the much-appreciated co-operation of local bird recorders, put in place a national mechanism to track the establishment and spread of populations of these non-native species.

The information gathered will assist conservation agencies and the Government to fulfil Article 8 of the Biodiversity Convention, and other international treaties, such as the EU Birds Directive, which stress the need to ensure that releases of non-native species are closely regulated and do not result in ecological conflicts with native fauna or flora, whether in this country or farther afield.

This first report is not claimed to be complete: not all county recorders were able to send in information, though it is to be hoped that this will be possible in future years. It does, however, briefly set out the known status of most of the scarcer non-native breeding birds and is the first step towards regular monitoring of the situation throughout the UK.

Such monitoring will become much more effective if all birdwatchers will report the presence of escapes and, especially, any breeding activity to their local recorder. It is to be hoped that the dismissal of escapes as of no interest is already a thing of the past. Several species already deserve much closer study than has so far been paid them and we would encourage local bird clubs to organise surveys of some of them. For example, the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* lives in areas of high human population density, but, until recently (Pithon & Dytham 1999), has received remarkably little attention.

All non-native species reported to the Panel as having bred in 1996 are listed below, together with those species known to breed regularly even if no actual 1996 records were received. For completeness, all the common non-native breeding species are included. Only records involving breeding or potential breeding activity are included, with the exception of the rarer pheasants. The mere presence of these highly sedentary and secretive birds is all that is normally reported, but it can be regarded as indicative of breeding.

The letters after the species' names are the categories used by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC 1998):

- A Species which have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1st January 1950.
- B Species which were recorded in an apparently natural state at least once up to 31st December 1949, but have not been recorded subsequently.
- C Species that, although originally introduced by man, either deliberately or accidentally, have established breeding populations derived from introduced stock, that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.
- E Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees or escapees from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. Species of which Category E individuals have been recorded as nesting, with their own kind, are marked with an asterisk (E*).

The following species, shown as Category C in the British List, are dealt with in the Panel's reports on rare breeding birds (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999): Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*. All other Category C species are listed below, including, for completeness, those common ones for which the Panel is not gathering information.

Records are given by county, in alphabetical order within England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

NORFOLK Up to 30 free-winged and unmarked birds of European race *nycticorax* breeding in a colony of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* at Great Witchingham Park, associated with similar-sized captive flock. Reported as virtually sedentary and never wandering far.

LOTHIAN Although there are still some birds. (of the American race *hoactli*) free-flying in Edinburgh Zoo which occasionally

wander, no breeding now takes place away from the Zoo.

These two long-standing colonies are apparently wholly dependent upon captive conditions and artificial feeding.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* (AC)

This species is not included in the Panel's list.

The most recent population estimate for Britain is 25,750 (Scott & Rose 1996).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

ESSEX Pair bred on Raphael Park Lake, Upminster town centre, seen with two cygnets. Pair in Romford town centre did not breed.

WILTSHIRE Two pairs bred at Ramsbury Manor, seen with one and three cygnets respectively. Another pair and a single at two other localities.

Many singles and occasional pairs are reported from, particularly, the southern half of England, but these are the only breeding reports to be received.

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

DUNBARTONSHIRE Two pairs bred, but both nests flooded and eggs destroyed.

These were the only known escaped pairs to breed, though several others were present at localities in England. Apparently wild pairs also bred in Scotland (Ogilvie *et al.* 1999).

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus* (AE*)

No reports received.

In 1991, Delany (1993) reported a pair breeding in Lancashire, among a total of 88 birds recorded at 29 sites.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* (AE*)

ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the Greenland race *flavirostris*, from a waterfowl collection, bred on Islay away from the collection site, rearing four young.

In 1991, Delany (1993) reported a pair of the nominate race breeding in Norfolk, among a total of 77 recorded at 11 sites.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser* (ACE*)

Not included in the Panel's list.

In 1991, Delany (1993) reported a total of 19,501 individuals at 447 sites.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus* (E*)

DERBYSHIRE Pair bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER Pair bred unsuccessfully.

HAMPSHIRE Pair at Eversley Cross.

A total of 85 was reported by Delany (1993) in 1991 at a minimum of 27 sites, with three broods at Stratfield Saye, Hampshire, the only breeding record.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

HAMPSHIRE Six pairs bred (five at Eversley Gravel-pit, one at Stratfield Saye), but no young reared.

NORFOLK Large free-flying colony at Sandringham Park; no counts and not certain if bred, but 50 seen in spring 1995.

ARGYLL Two pairs bred, Coll. No breeding records from Mull, but Coll/Mull flock of 40-50 in both winters (1995/96 and 1996/97). These birds stem from a former waterfowl collection on Mull.

In addition to the free-winged flock on the neighbouring islands of Mull and Coll, Delany (1993) reported a further 120 at 26 sites, with young seen at three sites, in Bedfordshire, Hampshire and Norfolk.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis* (ACE*)

Not included in the Panel's list.

The most recent census was in 1991 by Delany (1993) which found 63,581 at 1,210 sites throughout the UK. The average annual rate of increase since the previous survey, in 1976, had been 8.3%.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

ESSEX Three pairs reared broods at Hamford Water.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE 15 pairs bred at Frampton Gravel Pits, with free-flying flock

there and at Slimbridge totalling about 70.
HAMPSHIRE 22-25 pairs (17-20 pairs at Stratfield Saye reared 47 young; four pairs at Eversley Gravel-pit and one at Eversley Cross all failed).

NORFOLK Six pairs bred (five at Pensthorpe, one at Hickling fledging five young); additional feral flocks totalling 177 at three localities.

SUFFOLK Up to ten pairs bred (up to seven at Heveningham Hall, where two pairs seen with young and flock totalled 122 in October, two at Kessingland Wildlife Park, pair at Weybread Pits).

ARGYLL Three pairs from a waterfowl collection bred unsuccessfully on Islay, away from the collection site.

Delany (1993) reported a total of 925 at 89 sites, with successful breeding occurring at 15 sites, compared with the 11 sites reported here.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (CE*)

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Pair bred on Aberdeen Pool; first breeding for county.

HAMPSHIRE Pair at Wellington Country Park did not breed, though had done in 1995.

KENT Single pairs at two localities, no young seen.

LEICESTERSHIRE Pair bred at Rutland Water.

NORFOLK Three pairs bred at two sites, four at two other sites, one or two pairs at 16 other sites, probably under-recorded.

SUFFOLK Up to seven pairs bred at six localities.

SURREY Pair with two young; second breeding record for county.

In 1991, pairs with broods were reported by Delany (1993) from 23 sites, all but two in Norfolk; single pairs bred in Leicestershire and Berkshire. The reports in 1996 indicate that the population is still spreading out from its traditional stronghold. The total population in 1991 was 906 at 47 sites.

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

NORFOLK Pair bred, seen with two young.

Although many individuals and small groups of this species are present throughout the year, mainly in southern England, but also turning up in Scotland, breeding is rare and this is the only report.

MUSCOVY DUCK *Cairina moschata* (E*)

DEVON No specific breeding records, but quite widespread and flocks of up to 75 reported.

NORTHUMBERLAND Pair bred on Derwent Reservoir; two young may have fledged from a brood of 15; two other adults present.

SURREY Quite common on town and private lakes and probably breeding, but not usually reported.

No reports were received of the breeding population in Cambridgeshire where a population of about 130 birds was recorded in 1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa* (E*)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE/HUNTINGDONSHIRE Pair on Little Paxton Gravel-pit in May.

GREATER MANCHESTER Male paired with female Mandarin Duck *A. galericulata*, seen with seven ducklings (but not proven hybrids which have never been recorded and are, in any case, highly improbable because of genetic incompatibilities between the two species).

KENT 24 pairs reported, of which two proved to breed, six probably did and 16 possibles.

SURREY Singles at two localities, one with female (but not known whether this species or Mandarin Duck).

Single birds and small groups are widely reported, but these are the only breeding or possible breeding records received.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata* (CE*)

ARGYLL Up to six pairs bred at two sites in Loch Eck area.

HIGHLAND Three pairs bred in Strathnairn.

DOWN Population of 20-30 pairs has become established along the Shimna River since 1978.

Although not on the Panel's list, these breeding records from outwith the main breeding range seem worth recording. The total British population was estimated at 7,000 individuals by Davies (1988).

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* (AC)

Not included in the Panel's list.

The British breeding population has been estimated at about 100,000 pairs (Owen *et al.* 1986), with a post-breeding total of about 500,000. Autumn numbers are nearly doubled by the release of an estimated 400,000 birds artificially reared for shooting purposes (Harradine 1982).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors* (AE)

ESSEX Pair nest-building on Connaught Water on 1st April.

This pair has been present there since at least 1994. This species is recorded as a Category E species, but has never been proved to breed in the wild in the UK (BOURC 1998).

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina* (AE*)

GLOUCESTERSHIRE/WILTSHIRE At least 20 pairs on gravel-pits of Cotswold Water Park, with peak of 90 birds in December. No information available on breeding success.

INNER LONDON At least ten captive-bred young birds were full-winged after 1996 breeding season.

NORFOLK Large free-flying population at Pensthorpe, breeding status unknown.

Gibbons *et al.* (1993) estimated the total population in Britain in 1988-91 as under 100 individuals.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis* (CE*)

This species is not on the Panel's list.

The total of 3,625 was counted in January 1997 (WeBS, per B. Hughes).

CAPERCAILLIE *Tetrao urogallus* (BC)

This species is not on the Panel's list.

The population was estimated at 2,200 in 1992-94 by Catt *et al.* (1994).

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa* (CE*) AND **CHUKAR PARTRIDGE** *A. chukar* (E*)

Neither of these two species is on the Panel's list.

Releases of Chukar Partridges and of hybrid Redleg x Chukar have been banned since 1992. The population of Red-legged Partridges was estimated by Gibbons *et al.* (1993) at about 90,000 territories during 1988-91, with perhaps 1.5 million individuals at the start of the shooting season, including released birds.

SILVER PHEASANT *Lophura nycthemera* (E*)

NORFOLK Pair bred in 1994, but no report was received this year.

REEVES'S PHEASANT *Syrnaticus reevesii* (E*)

SURREY Two males, Banstead, 21st February.

There have been a number of attempts to introduce this species, but none successful. Singles have been seen in recent years in a number of counties in southern and eastern England.

COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus* (CE*)

This species is not on the Panel's list.

The British population of this species was estimated at 1.5-1.6 million females in 1989 (Robertson *et al.* 1989), although this is boosted by the annual release of an estimated 15-20 million hand-reared birds to supplement autumn populations for shooting (Potts 1990).

GOLDEN PHEASANT *Chrysolophus picta* (CE*)

DERBYSHIRE Pair present, but did not breed.

ISLES OF SCILLY Several pairs breed on



35. Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* preening, Bharatpur, India (David Tipling)

Tresco, though no specific report received for this year.

NORFOLK 19 reported from five localities, under-recorded in Brecks; some evidence of decline.

SUFFOLK Records from two traditional areas, with three males reported at one and two males and a female at the second. Thought to be declining.

ARGYLL Up to 12 individuals on Mull, population apparently not self-sustaining.

AYR Female at Lugar in May.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Probably four to six males in Palnure/Stonard area, declining.

Estimating numbers of this secretive and elusive bird is virtually impossible, though there is some consistency about the reports of declines. The population was estimated at 1,000-2,000 in 1981-84 (Lack 1986). No report was received from Tresco, Isles of Scilly, where several pairs occur.

LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT

Chrysolophus amherstiae (CE*)

BEDFORDSHIRE Population estimated at 100-200 individuals in 1991 (Trodd & Kramer 1991) had dropped to about 60 (less than 20% females) in 1995 and only 35 males in 1996 away from Luton Hoo, where there were only 15-20 (four or five females) with no breeding success. A three-year census of all suitable areas in the species'

stronghold is being conducted by the Bedfordshire Bird Club.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Breeds in two areas, perhaps ten pairs, but no recent survey.

The Bedfordshire population is thought to represent the majority of the British total (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

ROCK DOVE (AND FERAL PIGEON)

Columba livia (AC)

This species is not on the Panel's list.

Sharrock (1976) guessed that the British and Irish populations probably exceeded 100,000 pairs. Gibbons *et al.* (1993) refrained from even guessing at a total, except to say that the number of wild Rock Doves had probably declined and the number of Feral Pigeons had probably increased in the intervening period.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula*

krameri (CE*)

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Reported from four localities, breeding suspected at one.

KENT Several pairs bred at Foots Cray Meadows.

MIDDLESEX Breeding probable at Bushy Park.

SURREY Breeding reported from two localities. The roost at Esher Rugby Club reached a peak of 850 in December.

The size of the principal roost suggests a breeding population numbering hundreds of pairs. Estimates of the total population have varied in recent years from under 1,000 to 'several thousands' (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Peak counts in 1996 from the area covered by the *London Bird Report* (London Natural History Society 1997) were Surrey 1,198, Middlesex 174, Buckinghamshire 133, Kent 83, Inner London 4 and Hertfordshire 1.

Simultaneous counts at roosts in the London area and Kent in autumn 1996 to spring 1997 revealed an estimated total of 1,539 on 14th October and a peak count of 1,508 on 9th October (Pithon & Dytham 1999).

MONK PARAKEET *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

DEVON Up to ten free-flying birds at Bickleigh Mill, Tiverton, associated with an aviary. In past years, several pairs have nested locally in trees and electricity poles, but it is not known if any did so this year.

SURREY Pair at Lonsdale Road Reservoir, 26th July to 3rd November, seen nest-building in September, success unknown.

Ones and twos of this species have been reported from scattered localities as presumed escapes take place.

EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo* (E*)

ENGLAND Pair bred at a location in northern England and is thought to have fledged three young.

The provenance of this pair is unknown. The only previous breeding record was of a pair which bred in Moray & Nairn in 1984 and again in 1985, fledging a single chick (Cook 1992).

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua* (C)

This species is not on the Panel's list.

The British population was estimated to be between 6,000 and 12,000 pairs in 1988-91 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

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STATUS AND BREEDING ECOLOGY OF THE PURPLE SWAMP-HEN IN ITALY

MARCELLO GRUSSU



Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* (Mike Langman)

ABSTRACT The Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* is a poorly known species in the Western Palearctic, largely because of its elusive habits. Data on the status, distribution and breeding ecology of the Mediterranean population are still lacking. Sardinia holds 450-600 breeding pairs, representing the entire Italian breeding population, the only one inhabiting the central Mediterranean, and a substantial part of the nominate population of the species. Studies in Sardinia showed that the Purple Swamp-hen breeds in wetlands with dense areas of Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and bulrush *Typha*; its breeding season extends throughout the year.

In the nineteenth century, the Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in Europe inhabited southern Portugal, coastal Spain, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Sardinia and, possibly, Greece. In northern Africa, it was found on the Mediterranean part of the Maghreb, on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and in some interior wetlands of Tunisia. During the present century, the species suffered a dramatic reduction in its breeding range, so that it was included among the endangered species of Europe

(Parslow & Everett 1981). Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the Western Mediterranean population began to recover, recolonising previously deserted sites (Tucker & Heath 1994; Perrins & Snow 1998). The current total European population of the Purple Swamp-hen has been estimated at about 3,600 pairs, of which 3,000 are in Spain (Hagemeijer & Blair 1998). Owing to its rarity and elusive habits, however, detailed data on its breeding ecology are still lacking.

In Italy, the Purple Swamp-hen breeds only in Sardinia. This paper reports the results of a long-term study (1979-98) on its distribution, status and breeding biology in Italy.

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

The study covered the whole of Sardinia, with detailed work carried out mainly in the Stagno of Molentargius, near Cagliari, in the south of the island. This marsh extends over about 1,400 ha, 120 ha of which is covered with bulrushes *Typha* or reeds *Phragmites*, and holds 70-95 pairs of Purple Swamp-hens (Grussu & Sanna 1997).

During 1979-98, the author regularly undertook censuses of the species at sites where its presence was known or was probable: natural wetlands along the coast, river mouths, reservoirs and artificial canals with a reasonable cover of reeds or bulrushes. Counts were made throughout the year, for the most part by walking along the perimeters of wetlands and recording the position of individuals seen or heard. Information gathered by other researchers, fishermen, wildlife photographers and birdwatchers has been critically considered and evaluated.

Data on the breeding period are based on observations of chicks and nests over the whole island, and on searches made for nests at Molentargius. At the latter site, this work was undertaken throughout the year, but searches were less assiduous during the period August-October.

Pre-1979 data, together with those relating to areas outside Sardinia, have been drawn from the literature, from research in museum collections and from information provided by other workers.

HISTORICAL DISTRIBUTION IN ITALY

In Italy, during the nineteenth century, the Purple Swamp-hen was distributed in Sardinia, Sicily and possibly Apulia (Giglioli 1886). It was particularly

abundant in Sicily, where, in the Biviere of Lentini, about 1,500 individuals were caught annually for food (Martorelli 1906), but a dramatic decline then took place, and in the 1920s no more than about 100 were taken each year; the last nest was found in 1943, and a few years later the Biviere was drained and the species ceased to breed there. Within the same period, the Purple Swamp-hen rapidly declined in other Sicilian wetlands, disappearing altogether during the 1950s. Its current status in Sicily is only that of a vagrant (Iapichino & Massa 1989; Ciaccio & Priolo 1997; V. Orlando *in litt.*).

In Sardinia, the Purple Swamp-hen was reported breeding in the mid nineteenth century (Salvadori 1864), but, because of lack of ornithological knowledge, the size of the population was underestimated until the early twentieth century. An initial contribution on the species' distribution in Sardinia was provided by Mocci Demartis (1972), while Parslow (1974) estimated the breeding population at 50-100 pairs and probably increasing. Recently, Tucker & Heath (1994) put the Sardinian population at 240-300 breeding pairs. My own detailed studies, carried out since the 1970s, revealed a regular increase in numbers and an expansion of the breeding area.

The Purple Swamp-hen currently breeds at almost all Sardinian wetlands which support large or, in some cases, even small reedbeds (fig. 1), and new breeding sites are being discovered each year. The population now totals 450-600 breeding pairs, distributed in about 30 wetland sites. The most important areas are the Gulf of Oristano in the west (220-300 pairs) and Cagliari on the south coast (100-140 pairs). In the former area, the main sites are the Stagno of Cabras (85-110 pairs), the wetlands of Santa Maria di Neapolis near Marceddi (40-55 pairs) and the Stagno of Pauli Maiori (20-40 pairs), while in Cagliari the largest population is found at the Stagno of Molentargius-Quartu (70-95 pairs). In the Sassari area, in the northwest of the island, the Stagno of

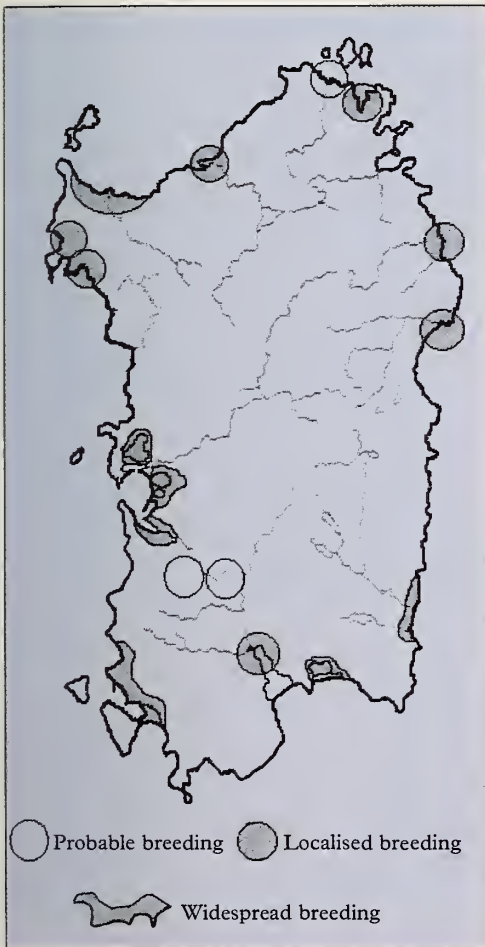


Figure 1. Breeding distribution of the Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in Sardinia, 1995-98.

Platamona is also a major locality (about 30 pairs). Many other sites of minor importance, holding small populations of up to ten pairs, but mostly three to five pairs, are scattered along the eastern coast and in the northern part of the island (Grussu & Sanna 1997 and unpublished).

MOVEMENTS

Populations of the nominate, Mediterranean subspecies are considered to be essentially resident (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Goodman & Meininger 1989; Grussu 1995; Kasperek *et al.* 1989). Some tendency to wander has been noted, however, both historically and more recently, and wild individuals have been observed on several occasions far from the normal breeding

areas (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1973). Local short-distance movements are related to food availability and to variations in water-level in the marshes. On the other hand, the mass movements observed among some localised populations are attributed to sudden changes in the environmental conditions of the breeding site. In Spain, Vielliard (1974) recorded that the marismas of the Guadalquivir are completely abandoned in summer owing to lack of water, and are reoccupied in autumn when rains flood the area. Similar behaviour has been noted in Sardinia (pers. obs.).

The occasional appearance of the species far from its known range is the result of dispersal. In Sardinia, during the period when the Purple Swamp-hen had a more limited, coastal distribution, there are records of individuals turning up inland, and more recently, in the mid 1980s, one was found dead on a hangar roof at Olbia airport on the northeastern coast, about 20 km from the nearest known breeding site (Giglioli 1890; Mocci Demartis 1980; Grussu unpublished). The species has often been seen in Corsica, with records before 1959 and in 1978, 1986, 1987 (possibly two), 1988 (identified as belonging to the nominate race) and 1989; some records have been in the north of the island (Thibault & Bonaccorsi in press). In mainland Italy, there are about 45 reports from 12 central and northern regions, from Apulia to Friuli-Venezia-Giulia; five of these records are in the last 20 years, the latest involving an adult of the nominate race in September 1994 in Tuscany (Arcamone & Trusendi unpublished).

This wandering tendency is further confirmed by a 1984 sighting of an individual near the Llobregat delta in Catalonia, northeast Spain, about 1,000 km from the species' known range at that time. In addition, a Purple Swamp-hen killed at Capestang, near Béziers, south France, in September 1992 had been ringed in the Natural Park of Aiguamolls of

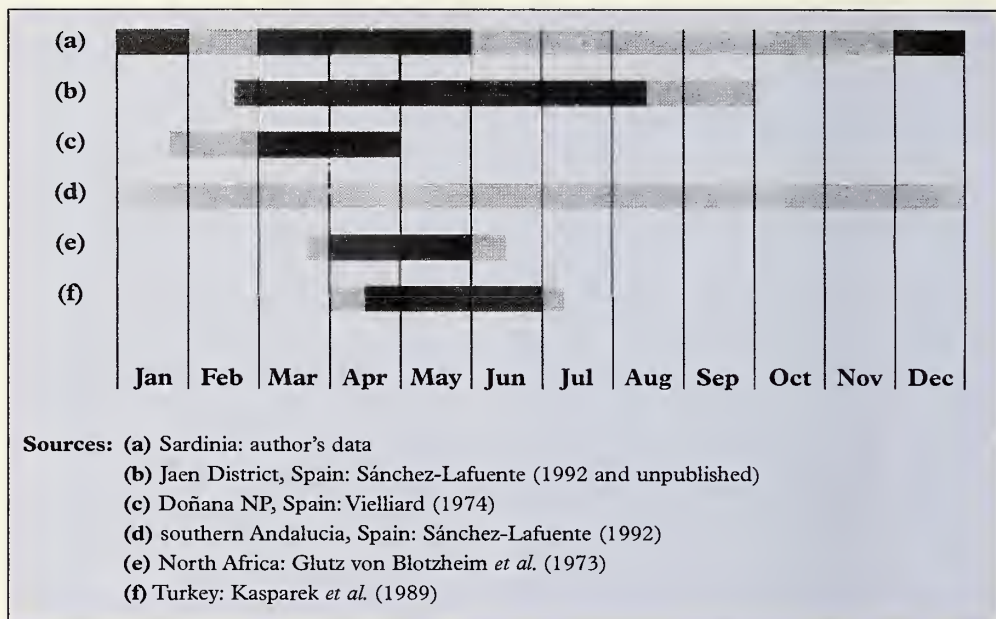


Figure 2. Timing of laying by the Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in the Mediterranean basin. Peak laying periods shown in black.

l'Emporda in Catalonia, where it was one of a group re-established in that part of Spain (Dubois & CHN 1993). Those individuals rather frequently seen in Mediterranean France since 1990 are almost certainly of Spanish origin (Mathevet 1997).

A further 17 records of the subspecies *madagascariensis*, which breeds in Egypt, sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar, are scattered throughout Italy. Some of these, and particularly those at the beginning of the twentieth century, may have involved genuine wild vagrants, although the presence of this species in several private collections and zoological parks does not allow a proper evaluation of the records.

HABITAT

In Sardinia, the Purple Swamp-hen is found on stagnant, shallow coastal wetlands with fresh or brackish water, generally at sea-level and within 10 km of the sea. It breeds mainly in reedbeds of medium height (but in some cases more than 4 m), mixed with bulrushes, club-rushes *Scirpus* and rushes *Juncus*. These wetlands usually include

meadows of Dwarf Eelgrass *Zostera noltii*, pondweed *Potamogeton*, hornwort *Ceratophyllum*, Beaked Tasselweed *Ruppia maritima*, duckweed *Lemna*, water-milfoil *Myriophyllum* and the alga *Enteromorpha intestinalis*.

The species also breeds to a lesser extent at river mouths, lakes and channels, and on the upper sections of rivers. At these sites, owing to the higher diversity of vegetation cover, the Purple Swamp-hen is found also among other plants, such as the pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*.

Interestingly, this gallinule has been found to tolerate a high degree of organic pollution on its breeding grounds. The extent to which it may be affected by other forms of pollution, however, remains unknown.

TIMING OF LAYING

In Italy, a wide variation in timing of breeding by the Purple Swamp-hen was reported as long ago as the nineteenth century. Giglioli (1886) noted laying in March-April and in June. In Sicily, Benoit (1840) indicated that breeding occurred in February-March, while Whitaker (1899)

observed captive individuals laying in December, April and July, but he also reported receiving fresh eggs in June.

In my Sardinian studies, a precise breeding period could not be defined, since eggs and/or chicks were found in all months of the year (fig. 2, table 1). Nevertheless, I identified two periods as more significant for egg-laying: March-May, and December-January. The former period accounted for 55% of a sample of 62 clutches observed in a single year, and the latter for 27%. By contrast, August-November was the period in which fewest clutches (6%) were laid, although it should be pointed out that searches were less thorough in August.

These findings do not accord with the existing literature on this species in the Mediterranean (fig. 2), a fact which may possibly be explained mainly by climatic factors. A different pattern was reported for the Spanish population, where timing of egg-laying was thought to be related to food availability, climatic conditions and water-level (Sánchez-Lafuente 1992 and unpublished). The early peak in Doñana was attributed to variations in water-levels in the marismas and to the consequent need to anticipate the timing of laying,

MONTH	NO. OF CLUTCHES
January	7
February	3
March	10-11
April	11
May	12
June	2
July	2
August	1
September	1
October	1
November	1
December	c. 10

Table 1. Number of clutches laid by Purple Swamp-hens *Porphyrio porphyrio* in each month, Sardinia, 1983-98. Figures based on observations of nests with eggs or chicks.

so as to avoid the risk of growing chicks finding themselves in dried-out conditions before reaching independence (Vielliard 1974).

The flexibility in timing of laying observed in Sardinia seems to be a result of the favourable physical, climatic and biological conditions of the sites occupied by the Purple Swamp-hen. Indeed, in Sardinia, this species breeds mostly in 'permanent' wetlands with a mild climate



36. Adult Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* walking in shallow water among bulrushes *Typha*, Sardinia, 1987 (Roberto Meloni)

(mean January temperature 10°C), areas which in winter attract several species which are very rare in Europe at that season (Grussu 1985; Grussu & Corso 1997).

THE NEST

In Sardinia, the nest is usually built in thick reed-beds or in small, isolated stands of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*. Of 21 nests located during 1986-93 in the Stagno of Molentargius, 16 (76%) were in sites dominated by Common Reed; these were all in small stands 1.2-3 m across and with a mean height of 90 cm (range 60-220 cm). The remaining five nests were in large reedbeds, either at or within 5 m of the edge.

Around the nests, mean and maximum heights of the vegetation were 85 cm and 200 cm, respectively. The diameter of the reed stems in the areas near the nests was 0.4-1 cm, and the water depth was generally 25-35 cm (range 20-55 cm), with one nest built in reeds growing in 100 cm of water. Nests were usually placed within the vegetation or directly on the water, but always anchored to the vegetation itself; only rarely were they built above the

water in the manner of heron nests, as previously reported in other breeding areas (Holyoak 1970).

The nest of this species is made of aquatic vegetation, and is similar to that of Common Coots *Fulica atra*. The material used depends on the vegetation available in the near vicinity. At Molentargius, the nest base consisted mostly of Common Reed stems with a diameter usually of 1.5-2.5 mm (1-5 mm), this being covered with a layer 6-13 cm deep of thinner material, such as reed fragments or leaves. More rarely, nests were constructed solely of leaves of Common Reed; or of reed stems, with no top layer of thin material. A nest found in the Gulf of Oristano consisted entirely of bulrushes (U. F. Foschi *in litt.*).

The mean dimensions of 21 nests were: external diameter 33.0 cm (range 27-50 cm); internal diameter 20.9 cm (13-32 cm); depth of cup 4.2 cm (1-8 cm); height of upper rim of cup from water 24.5 cm (14-41 cm). Half of the nests I observed were round in shape, 25% were ellipsoidal, and the rest more or less rectangular. All had one or two access ramps made of bent stems, leaves or stem fragments about 30-



37. Nest of Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in typical reedbed site, Sardinia, April 1986 (M. Grussu)

50 cm in length. The ramps, usually rectangular in shape, ranged in size from 9 x 40 cm to 20 x 70 cm and most (85%) were oriented to the south; we often found heaps of excrement and feathers of the

species near the top of these ramps. In some instances, the surrounding reed stems had been bent to form a canopy over the nest (R. Meloni *in litt.*), as reported also by Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* (1973).



38. Adult Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* incubating, Sardinia, late March 1986 (Roberto Meloni). This nest was built at the end of winter, with the reeds *Phragmites* still yellow.



39. Adult Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* covering chicks, Sardinia, mid-April 1986 (Roberto Meloni). The nest is that shown in plate 38, but photographed 20 days later.

At Molentargius, the minimum distance between nests was 4 m, and the minimum distance from nests of Common Coot and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* was 8 m. No other species was recorded breeding near Purple Swamp-hens at this wetland. The highest density recorded in the study was 16 nests in an area of 20 ha, 30% of which was reedbed.

Recent research on the Purple Swamp-hen in the Iberian Peninsula revealed that each pair built several nests, only one of which was used for breeding (Ramos 1990; Sánchez-Lafuente 1992 and in press). Similar behaviour was recorded for the subspecies *melanotus* in New Zealand (Craig 1980). No building of 'alternative nests' has been observed so far in Italy.

EGGS AND CHICKS

The eggs are subelliptical, smooth and glossy, cream-coloured or buff, and variably spotted with dark red, purple, violet or grey, the spots frequently more concentrated at the blunt end. The average

size of 58 eggs was 57.6 x 37.2 mm (range 52.0-61.6 x 34.1-39.1 mm).

Of 21 clutches, 12 contained four eggs (57% of clutches), with five of three eggs (24%), two of one, and single clutches each of two and five eggs; mean clutch size was 3.42 eggs. In Spain, clutches in the upper Guadalquivir usually contained three to six eggs (mean 4.03), but in other Spanish wetlands up to eight eggs were found (Sánchez-Lafuente 1992), these figures being similar to those given in Cramp & Simmons (1980) and Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* (1973). In Turkey, clutches of up to ten eggs were recorded (Kasperek *et al.* 1989).

Eggs are laid at daily intervals, and incubation starts with the last or the penultimate egg. In Sardinia, among three clutches totalling 12 eggs, the hatching success was 100%; of 14 eggs in four other clutches, four (28.5%) were preyed on.

The chick has a black, velvet-smooth plumage. The filoplumes on the head, mantle and wings have a white tip, while



40. Juvenile Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* about 12-15 days old, Sardinia, mid May 1991 (M. Grussu)



41. Adult Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in typical shallow-water habitat, Sardinia, 1986 (Roberto Meloni)

the neck is bare, with a few sparse plumes on the nape; alula and carpal joint are bare. The iris is brown, the bill and eyelids red or reddish, and the legs pale pink, with very long toes. Within a few weeks, the legs and toes become greyish or blackish, and the bill blackish.

Data on breeding success show a high rate of chick mortality. I recorded broods with four or five chicks; in about 30 subsequent sightings of family groups, however, over half (52%) were represented by just one young, 22% by two, 19% by three and only 7% by four young (M. Grussu & M. Sanna unpublished). In Spain, 40% of chicks die in the first six days, with an average fledging success of 1.23 chicks per nest (Sánchez-Lafuente 1992).

CONSERVATION

During the last 20 years, the breeding population of the Purple Swamp-hen in Sardinia has shown a steady increase. This

is probably a result of the enforcement of laws restricting hunting, the creation of protected areas in many wetlands, and specific protection measures, all of which have allowed the species to expand its breeding range and colonise new sites. On the other hand, several breeding localities have been destroyed by reclamation work or by burning of reedbeds, actions carried out both by private individuals and by public bodies. Data are still lacking on the possible effects of water pollution (pesticides, heavy metals) on reproductive success and adult survival.

Owing both to the positive dynamics of the population in recent decades and to the marked range extension in Sardinia, however, the Italian breeding population of the Purple Swamp-hen does not currently appear to be exposed to any serious threat. In addition, studies have begun on the feasibility of re-establishing this handsome species in some regions

where it formerly bred, including Sicily and Apulia.

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BUTTERFLIES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

RICHARD FOX

Butterfly Conservation and the Biological Records Centre are co-ordinating the largest and most comprehensive butterfly survey ever conducted in Britain and Ireland. The initial recording phase is now in its final year and will culminate in the publication of a much-needed new atlas in the year 2000.

Many butterfly species have suffered severe declines in recent years, and the new atlas will determine conservation priorities into the next millennium.

Although the survey has already built up an impressive database, more help is urgently required to fill the remaining gaps. Outside southern England, coverage is very variable and much more recording is needed (yellow and white areas on the map, fig. 1).

All species are being surveyed, and you do not need to be an expert to help. Birders have already played an important role, particularly in Scotland, so please get involved and note down a few butterflies. A free information pack

is available from Butterfly Conservation, PO Box 222, Dedham, Essex CO7 6EY (tel. 01206 322342).

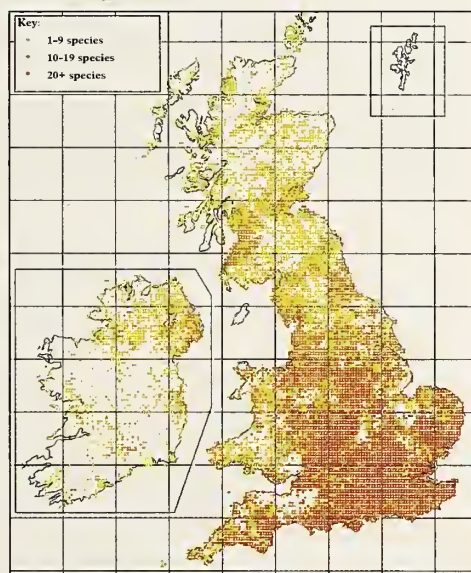


Figure 1. Number of butterfly species recorded in each 5-km square during 1995-98. Areas shown white (no record) or yellow (1-9 species) are seriously under-recorded; help from resident or visiting birdwatchers will be very welcome.



42. The spectacular Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja* may occur in many of those parts of Britain and Ireland which are at present under-recorded. This butterfly, which occurs on open grassy slopes, moors and woodland glades, has suffered local declines, and there is an urgent need to assess its current status.

SEPARATION OF EUROPEAN AND RED-NECKED NIGHTJARS

PETER LANSDOWN

In summer, Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis* is found only in parts of Portugal, Spain, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In each of these countries, its breeding range overlaps with that of the far more widespread European Nightjar *C. europaeus*. Both species winter farther south in Africa. The rare thrill of seeing a nightjar at rest in daylight, at least in Iberia and Northwest Africa, need not be clouded by non-identification.

Red-necked Nightjar is the bigger species, by approximately 15%, and has a proportionally larger head. These characters are, however, normally of little value when a resting individual is encountered, because of the difficulty of judging size given such an unfamiliar situation, and because of the effect that a nightjar's posture has on the apparent size of its head. A more tangible feature is the relatively short wings of

Red-necked Nightjar, which, at rest, do not extend so far along the tail as do those of European Nightjar, and thus leave a longer projection of the tail (one-third or more of its total length, compared with about one-quarter of European Nightjar's total length) beyond the wing-tips.

Although both species look predominantly grey at rest, the general appearance of Red-necked Nightjar is decidedly more warm-toned. It possesses a broad, pale, orange-buff or rufous-buff half-collar on the hindneck and a similar colour on the sides of the neck, the chin, the centre of the throat and the upper breast, and often also on the upper scapulars and the tips of the upperwing coverts. Its white throat-patches are comparatively large and conspicuous and its upper scapulars and lesser coverts are not so solidly dark-looking as are those of European



43. Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, Spain, May 1957 (Eric Hosking)



44. European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Yorkshire, 1917 (Tom Fowler)

Nightjar. The pale tips to the lesser and median coverts of Red-necked Nightjar are individually big, but are quite widely spaced and form, at best, broken wing-bars. Those of European Nightjar are smaller, but, owing to their lack of buff coloration and the greater uniformity of the remainder of the wing-coverts, create fairly prominent, white wing-bars. Two races of European Nightjar breed in Europe: the nominate race in the north and a paler race, *meridionalis*, in the south, as well as in Northwest Africa. Within each race, clinal colour variation occurs, and the darkest birds are found at the western end of the range. Throughout the region, juveniles are lighter-coloured than adults. So, while European Nightjar is, on average, the darker of the two species, the plumage of many individuals closely matches the paleness, though not the warmth, of Red-necked Nightjar.

The usual view of a nightjar is, however, of one in flight at dusk, or after dark, when it is not possible to appreciate the plumage tones and the subtleties of the markings which are visible in daylight on a resting individual. To those who are familiar with European Nightjar in flight, Red-necked Nightjar is distinctive. In addition to its larger size and proportionally slightly heavier-looking head and shorter wings,

its wing-tips are more rounded. This is because the tips of its eighth and tenth primaries fall noticeably closer to the tip of the longest ninth primary than do those of European Nightjar. The differences between the two in size and structure give the flight of each characteristic qualities. While Red-necked Nightjar looks comparatively strong and majestic in the air, with more measured wing-beats, European Nightjar appears faster, with greater manoeuvrability and a more erratic flight-line.

When flying at or after dusk, the nightjars can also be separated by their plumage characters. All Red-necked Nightjars have white, sometimes at least partially greyish-white or buff-white, spots on the outermost three primaries and on the tips of the outermost pairs of tail-feathers. These show as an obvious white bar on each wing and two striking white patches on the tail, and are visible from above and below. Those of males are noticeably larger and more pure white than those of females, and are thus more conspicuous. Adult male European Nightjar's pale spots on the wings and tail resemble those of female Red-necked Nightjar, but adult female, first-winter and juvenile European Nightjars lack such markings. If it is not too dark, further flight characters may be

visible. The upperwing of European Nightjar displays a greater contrast between dark lesser coverts and uniformly pale median and greater coverts than that of Red-necked Nightjar, which possesses relatively pale lesser coverts and more variegated median and greater coverts. The underwing of European Nightjar has more broadly and continuously dark-barred primaries and secondaries than that of Red-necked Nightjar, but lacks the latter's dark trailing edge. These two additional Red-necked Nightjar features are shown by the individual in plate 46.

European Nightjar's song comprises a loud and resonant, sustained, dry churr which alternates abruptly between two pitches. Red-necked Nightjar's song is

decidedly different. It is a loud and echoing, long series of repeated staccato pairs of notes: 'kur-tok'.

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AUTHOR

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45. European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Norfolk, June 1982 (Roger Tidman)



46. Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, Spain, May 1988 (Stefan Danko)

REVIEWS

Eastern Rarities: the birds of Beidaihe

Filmed by Paul Doherty.

Narrated by Bill Oddie.

Bird Images, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1998. Video.

Running time 2 hours 13 minutes. £16.95.

For many birders, 'Eastern Rarities' such as Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* are the Holy Grail. For these aficionados, Paul Doherty's new Bird Images video, packed with mostly first-class footage of over 138 species filmed at Beidaihe, is an essential reference.

An excellent 24-minute introduction provides an overview of a typical Beidaihe trip and identifies the various sites, cultural as well as ornithological, around this Chinese coastal resort. The bulk of the video, however, is given over to the species footage. Some, such as Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, will be familiar, while others depict eastern races of more widespread species (e.g. Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica baueri* and Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva albicilla*). Others, such as Siberian *Muscicapa sibirica* and Grey-streaked Flycatchers *M. griseisticta*, are likely future additions to the British List, while still others, such as Relict Gull *Larus relictus*, Grey-sided Thrush *Turdus feae* and Yellow-streaked Warbler *Phylloscopus armandii*, are unlikely ever to reach western Europe. The vast majority of the species, however, have a proven history of vagrancy to Europe (and North America).

Narrated by Bill Oddie, the video depicts several individuals of most species, often illustrating both sexes and a variety of ages (e.g. no fewer than ten different Yellow-breasted Buntings *Emberiza aureola* are included). The

A BIRD IMAGES video guide

EASTERN RARITIES:

THE BIRDS OF BEIDAIHE



Narrated by Bill Oddie

Filmed by Paul Doherty

identification of most is lucidly and informatively discussed, and there is an excellent use of freeze-frame and slow-motion to illustrate points such as underwing patterns (e.g. of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*) and head patterns (e.g. of Arctic *Phylloscopus borealis* and Two-barred Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus (trochiloides) plumbeitarsus*).

There is some stunning footage. My favourites include Pacific Golden Plover and Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* (both supported by some excellent vocalisations), Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* and a juvenile Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*.

Filmed on trips in May and October, the video is an impressive, professionally produced reference and, at £16.95, a sensibly priced investment.

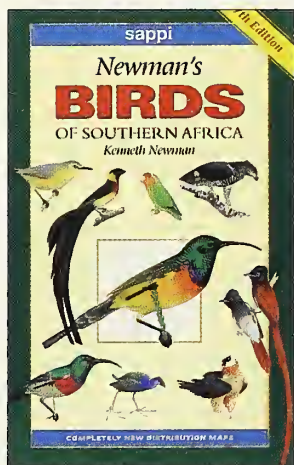
PAUL HOLT

Newman's Birds of Southern Africa

Seventh edition. Written and illustrated by Kenneth Newman.

New Holland, London, 1999. 455 pages of maps and illustrations, 510 pages in all.

ISBN 1-86812-757-5. Paperback £19.99.



First published in 1983, the prime reason for the latest edition is to incorporate the mass of data recently published in the *Atlas of Southern African Birds* in the excellent colour distribution maps, though the opportunity has been taken to reset the text and make minor amendments to the plates, reflecting some of the recent advances in knowledge. Thus, additional species include Barlow's Lark *Certhilauda barlowi*, described in 1996, though the Long-tailed Pipit *Anthus longicaudatus*, described in the same year, is omitted, as is the Mascarene Shearwater *Puffinus atrodorsalis*, described a year earlier. On the other hand, the author has split White-chinned Petrel into two species, *Procellaria nequinoctialis* and *P. conspicillata*, so the taxonomic revision seems somewhat uneven. Rare vagrants are now shown on six new plates, though with bizarre groupings which could easily have been avoided, such as Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* on the same page as a wheatear *Oenanthe* and Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* with a wagtail *Motacilla*.

New features include colour photographs of various types of habitat, and

'user-friendly' colour-coded page corners dividing the birds into 12 groups for ease of location.

MARTIN WOODCOCK

Birds of the New Forest: a visitor's guide

By Alan Michael Snook.

Centurion Books, Fordingbridge, 1998.

112 pages; 6 colour photographs;

51 line-drawings; 9 maps; 8 histograms.

ISBN 0-9533346-0-0. Paperback £12.95.

The inadequacies of style and grammar throughout this text should not deter readers from appreciating its genuine value as a guide to the birds of this magnificent jewel of southern England. The ornithological wealth of this huge area of extensive heathlands, broadleaf, coniferous and mixed woodlands, valley bogs, grass 'lawns', scrub, forest streams, freshwater ponds, and coastal mud, marsh and shingle is indeed great, and even the regular visitor can make new discoveries. This book, however, is intended more for the casual visitor with limited knowledge of the Forest, and, as such, it succeeds.

Eight main sites (well chosen, though there are many others) are featured, each with a map and with excellent instructions on best routes to follow, plus information on birds to be expected, including national rarities, and good tips on how not to miss them. The bulk of the book consists of a systematic list of all bird species recorded: useful data in brief, up-to-date summaries, with appropriate historical data for comparison. A checklist with tick-boxes is included.

Unless you know the area really well, it would be silly to visit the New Forest without this guide. But do, please, put the welfare of all its wildlife before your own desire to see more.

DAVID A. CHRISTIE

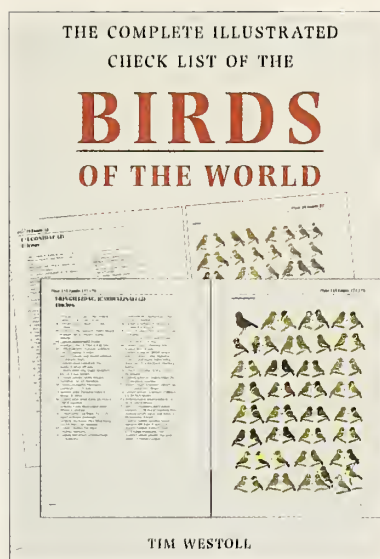
The Complete Illustrated Check List of the Birds of the World

By Tim Westoll. Glinger Publications, Carlisle, 1998. 784 pages.
ISBN 0-9533367-0-0. Hardback. £40.00.

My first reaction to this book was one of astonishment that anybody could attempt what many would consider impossible. It really is an amazing effort and perhaps the concept could only have been achieved by somebody who was completely single-minded about the project, and willing to spend a lifetime in its compilation. One has to admire the author for completing such an immense task.

In the 30 years that Tim Westoll spent producing this hefty volume, other World lists have been published, causing him constantly to rethink his way forward. He has gone for the 'Basel' sequence, named over 10,300 species or races, and admits to not wanting to address the many current arguments concerning species versus race. On that, he has my sympathy. The list itself is quite readable, giving English name(s), scientific names and origins. The text faces the plates for quick reference. As one would expect, the illustrations range from small to ridiculously minute. A magnifying glass is necessary for some, including the hummingbirds, and despite the author's claim to the contrary, identification is still nigh on impossible. The plates also have a dated feel about them, are by necessity diagrammatic, and, I feel, have the quality of cartoons. This would not matter so much if the publisher had not claimed that this book will make identification significantly easier and is an indispensable volume to be carried on every expedition. There may well be a number of travelling ornithologists who would find this tome useful at home in their library, but I doubt whether many would find any benefit in hauling it around the World.

DEREK MOORE



Collins Pocket Guide Birds of North America

Concept and design by Jack L. Griggs.
HarperCollins, London, 1998. 300 pages.
ISBN 0-00-220109-7. £16.99.

Most field guides have some plus points and this one is no exception. At first glance, I found the format a little odd and the shape (tall and narrow) inconvenient. On reflection, the shape is in keeping with a pocket guide and the format is soon adjusted to.

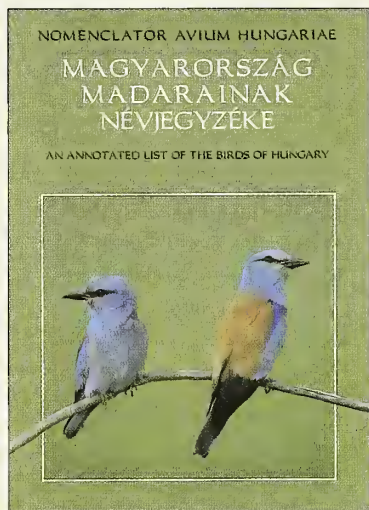
With at least three good field guides for North American birds already well established, I am not sure at whom this book is aimed. It does not seem radically 'new concept' enough to be outstanding, but the illustrations are generally good and the text often contains useful identification snippets (as it should, considering the impressive array of consultants). It makes an effort to alert readers to the need for conservation, encouraging membership of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), though it is not clear whether any of the book price is donated to the ABC. On balance, this is another book worth having.

DAVID HOLMAN

SHORT REVIEWS

Magyarország Madarainak Névjegyzéke – an annotated list of the birds of Hungary

By Gábor Magyar, Tibor Hadarics, Zoltán Waliczky, András Schmidt, Tamás Nagy & Attila Bankovics. Winter Fair, Budapest-Szeged, 1998. 202 pages. ISBN 963-04-9180-7. Hardback £15.00.



It seems hard to believe that it is ten years since the major political changes in Eastern Europe. In that time, many Westerners have seized the opportunity to visit the wide variety of amazing pristine habitats of this region. Hungary has been a popular destination, and most visitors will have concentrated on the Hortobagy and perhaps the Lake Balaton region. This excellent book will serve any future travellers well. The introduction and detailed checklist have English summaries, but the highlight for many will be the outstanding collection of colour plates. The quality is excellent and it features such Hungarian specialities as Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*, Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* and Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*.

DEREK MOORE

Kampfläufer in Schleswig-Holstein: ein Tagebuch aus den Jahren 1986-97

By Jürgen Rohde. Oskar-Alexander-Str. 20, 24576 Bad Bramstedt, 1998. 207 pages. No price given.

Six pages of German text, a six-line English summary, and 186 pages of colour photographs of breeding-plumage male Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*. Although they are not of the highest quality, the photographs do show the infinite variety of the breeding males, and, since they were taken over 12 seasons, not only that lekking males are recognisable in subsequent years, but that some may reoccur over as many as eight seasons. A book for the Ruff enthusiast.

R. J. CHANDLER

Shrikes of the World II: conservation implementation

Edited by Reuven Yosef & Fred E. Lohrer. International Birdwatching Center, Eilat, 1998. 119 pages. Paperback US\$15.

These are the Proceedings of the Second International Shrike Symposium, held during 17th-23rd March 1996 in Eilat, Israel. The science is variable in quality and there is less than I had hoped for on conservation measures; nevertheless, these Proceedings play a vital role in focusing attention on the problems facing shrikes (Laniidae). Papers from some 17 countries cover many aspects of their biology, including status, migration, habitat selection, foraging ecology, reproduction and conservation. The great value of this publication lies in the synergistic effect of the common threads emerging from so many disparate studies. It is time that we took more notice of the plight of the beleaguered shrike populations.

ANDY EVANS

I-WeBS Report 1995-96: the Irish Wetland Survey

By Simon Delany. BirdWatch Ireland, Monkstown, 1997. 157 pages. ISBN 1-899240-08-3. Paperback £10.00.

This publication presents the results from the second season of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey, and includes counts from Northern Ireland. It is a comprehensive compilation of monthly counts from September to March of waterbirds: divers *Gavia*, grebes (Podicipedidae), Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, rails (Rallidae), wildfowl (Anseriformes), waders, gulls and terns (Charadriiformes), and Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. Results are given by species, with distribution maps, histograms, tables indicating important sites, comparisons with previous counts, a gazetteer of all sites where counts were made, and more. An important conservation document, and a credit to all who contributed.

R. J. CHANDLER

Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler

By Sergei Timofeevich Aksakov: translated from the Russian by Kevin Windle. North Western University Press, Evanston, 1998. 304 pages. ISBN 0-8101-1391-0. US\$29.95.

Sergei Timofeevich Aksakov (1791-1859) tells us, for instance, that 'I have had occasion to kill three or four Phalaropes [Red-necked *Phalaropus lobatus*] with one shot. Their flesh is tasty and succulent, although they are never fat'; that sportsmen in St Petersburg called the Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 'by the name "fi-fi", in imitation of its repetitive call'; and gives detailed descriptions of the nesting habits and behaviour of those birds (usually large and edible) which he was able to identify.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Pittas of the World

By Johannes Erritzoe & Helga Boulet Erritzoe. The Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1998. 207 pages. ISBN 0-7188-2961-1. £30.00.

A large-format book with 10% of its pages devoted to over 1,300 references has clearly been exhaustively researched. The family introduction and individual species chapters (just 30 species recognised) are crammed with a vast amount of detailed museum-based information and every aspect of field studies found in the literature or gleaned from correspondents. The 32 colour plates by the author's wife are painted from skins: some are rather wooden and duller than in life. An informative book, but not essential for field birders.

NICK DYMOND

One Season in the Taiga

By Vadim Ryabitsev. Russian Nature Press, Edinburgh, 1998. 179 pages. ISBN 0-9532990-0-7. Paperback £10.00.

The ecologist author gives a perceptive account of an expedition to observe the breeding behaviour of leaf-warblers *Phylloscopus* north of the Urals. Two enthusiastic, reflective naturalists camp out for a season, studying warbler territories and detailing other wildlife. Line-drawings enliven the text, which is attractively written and, apparently, well translated.

'Taiga' is marshy coniferous forest. Ornithologists who yearn to explore Russia can enjoy this book and imagine that they are in that habitat. I did just that.

PHILIP RADFORD

CORRECTION

The reviews of *The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary* 1999 and *The Birds of St Helena* (Brit. Birds 92: 104) were written by R. J. Prytherch, not as stated. We apologise for this error.

Field Guide to the Birds of Australia

By Graham Pizzey & Frank Knight.
HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1997.
576 pages. ISBN 0-00-2220132-1. £19.99.

Owners of the earlier Pizzey field guide to Australian birds with the same title should not assume this is merely a revised edition. It is a completely new book, with 250 stunning new plates by Frank Knight, over 700 up-to-date distribution maps, and a very good text, laid out in the modern style with the species accounts opposite the plates on each double-page spread. The large format of the book has allowed Graham Pizzey room for fairly lengthy species texts, though the book will not fit into most pockets. Size aside, the cover claim that this is 'The definitive work on bird identification' might almost be justified, though presumably this is publisher's hype rather than any claim by the author. Highly recommended for anyone birding in Australia, in any case.

DAVID FISHER

ALSO RECEIVED:

Collins Field Guide: Bird Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East

By Colin J. O. Harrison & Peter Castell.
(HarperCollins, London, 1998. New edition.
462 pages. ISBN 0-00-220125-9. £17.99). Last
edition reviewed *Brit. Birds* 69: 38-39.

The Refugees from Daffodil Cottage

By Ian Rudd (Minerva Press, London, 1998. 174 pages. ISBN 0-75410-404-4. £5.99). A feathery, rather than furry, 'Watership Down', with 'Rusty Robin', 'Peter & Molly Blue Tit' and their friends coping with habitat destruction, pesticides and natural disasters.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Treasury of Bird Lore

By Josephine Addison; illustrated by Cherry Hillhouse (André Deutsch, London, 1998. 159 pages. ISBN 0-233-99435-1. £12.99). An entertaining little volume, with a snatch or two of poetry and an outline of the origins and development of each bird's English name, for 40 familiar species.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Nos Virtuoses: chant d'oiseaux

CD. Edited by Maxime Metzmacher (Etudes & Environnement, Flemalle, 1993. Running time 51 min. £12.50). The songs of ten European birds, with a small booklet available in English, Dutch, French or German.

ANNOUNCEMENT

OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN THE BOURC

For the first time, the British Ornithologists' Union is inviting applications and nominations for the new members of its Records Committee (BOURC) to succeed those members retiring at the end of their term of office.

The BOU is currently seeking replacements for Richard Porter (retires 1999) and for Ken Shaw (retires in April 2000). The

term of office is usually for eight to ten years, with the longest-serving member of the ten members retiring each year.

The primary function of the BOURC is to maintain the official list of birds recorded in Great Britain (the British List) and to determine into which category (A, B, C, D, E) a record should be placed. Except in the cases of old specimens and of new species resulting from taxonomic changes, records of claims to admission to the British List are

considered first by the British Birds Rareties Committee (BBRC), which assesses identification before passing the documentation on to the BOURC. The BOURC confirms identification and then goes on to consider the likely origin of the bird before deciding into which category the record should be placed.

The BOURC also studies taxonomic advances and initiates research in this field. Information on feral populations is monitored, and reviews are undertaken of older records.

The BOURC is an appointed committee of BOU Council and comprises ten members, including a Chairman and Secretary and the Chairman of the BBRC. The Committee is a well-balanced team of birders with international ornithological and birding experience and knowledge, and includes both professionals and amateurs. Skills of individual members include detailed knowledge of bird distribution, taxonomy, statistics, the wild-bird trade, genetics and historical research. Expertise in bird identification is also extremely important. The ability to handle regular batches of paperwork is essential, and is entirely voluntary and unpaid.

The present members are Tony Marr (Chairman), Ian Dawson (Secretary), Colin Bradshaw (BBRC Chairman), Paul Harvey, Alan Knox, Ian Lewington, Richard Porter, Tony Prater, Ken Shaw and Roger Wilkinson.

Applications from, or nominations on behalf of, interested persons possessing the necessary motivation, experience, knowledge and skills measured against the above criteria, are now invited for the one post to be filled during 1999 and the second in April 2000. Please indicate clearly which vacancy you would be available to fill if your application is successful.

In addition, the BOURC is enlarging its Taxonomic Sub-committee (TSC) from three to six members to broaden expertise and to enable the BOURC to deal more effectively with the increasing workload in this era of ever-accelerating taxonomic change.

The enlarged TSC at present comprises three members from the current Records Committee (Tony Marr, Dr Alan Knox and Dr Tony Prater) and two from outside the Committee (Professor David Parkin and Dr Andreas Helbig). We are now seeking applications from interested persons, or nominations on behalf of suitable persons, to bring the TSC to full strength in this interesting, topical and important work.

The TSC is responsible for making recommendations to the BOURC on taxonomic changes affecting the British List.

The work of members of the TSC covers all aspects of taxonomy and record assessment, including assessing claims against known criteria; interpreting museum specimens and collections; monitoring relevant literature; addressing issues on taxonomy, nomenclature and sequence; literature searching; and keeping abreast of current systematic research, technical literature, and emerging issues.

In having the ability to handle the work described above, potential applicants or nominees must show that they have enthusiasm for current developments in avian classification and speciation; a sound knowledge and understanding of species concepts and their application; practical and acknowledged expertise in the field; and the ability to evaluate critically and analyse evidence. Access to e-mail would be a great advantage. The term of office would be for two years initially, and is renewable.

Formal applications and nominations are invited for all these positions, and should include an outline of relevant experience, knowledge and qualifications matched against the above criteria. These should be posted, faxed or e-mailed by 15th May 1999 to Tony Marr (BOURC Chairman), Two Hoots, Old Hall Farm Barns, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7SF. Tel & Fax: +44 (0) 1 263 741 313. E-mail: bourc.chair@bou.org.uk

NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

WATER RAIL KILLING AND EATING WADER

Peter Barry's note on a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* stabbing a Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 224) prompts me to record the following. On 17th September 1990, at Porth Hellick Pool, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, about 70 waders of ten species were foraging on the extensive mud; at least seven Water Rails fed among them, but closer to the reedbed and regularly disappearing into it. Suddenly noticing a struggle, I saw an adult rail stabbing a wader; at that moment, the rail forced its victim down on to the mud, and within 1-2 minutes had killed it by heavy pecks to its head, probably holding the wader down with its feet. As the wader lay on its back, the Water Rail began to stab its belly, eventually pulling out and eating the intestines, as well as some other small pieces, between bouts of heavy stabbing. After a couple of minutes, the rail walked into the reedbed and preened. It returned five minutes later to fumble at the corpse; this action attracted a nearby Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, which chased off the rail, but immediately walked away. The rail returned again to the corpse, but soon lost interest.

I could not be certain of the identification of the wader: I thought it to be a Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, but it may well have been a Common Snipe. In addition, it was not clear how the rail first attacked the wader, whether with its bill or with its feet.

The largest prey mentioned for Water Rail in various handbooks is Little Stint *C. minuta*, and there are some records of adult Marsh Frogs *Rana ridibunda* (P. Becker in litt.). The size of the victim is therefore remarkable. The rail's behaviour cannot be explained solely by food shortage, as the weather was quite warm and plenty of food was available. It was possibly motivated initially by territorial aggression, which turned into foraging behaviour.

It is interesting that Peter Barry's observation was made at exactly the same site one year earlier. It seems possible that I saw the same individual Water Rail, which had discovered, perhaps through territorial attacks, that waders are fairly easy and profitable prey. Waders are not suspicious of rails, which superficially resemble them in appearance (long legs and bill, not very big) and behaviour (walking slowly, picking in the mud), and will therefore approach rails closely. Common Snipe, in particular, may be vulnerable owing to its habit of hiding rather than running away.

I thank Peter Becker for his comments.

Klemens Steiof
Seestraße 60, D-13347 Berlin, Germany

MOORHEN DRINKING LIQUID GOOSE FAECES

On 11th March 1994, at Verulamium Park, St Albans, Hertfordshire, I observed a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* drinking the liquid matter of the faeces just left by an adult Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*. The Moorhen's act was quite deliberate, and I wondered whether its intentions might have been to obtain certain nutrients.

Gareth Watkins
178 Watford Road, Chiswell Green, St Albans,
Hertfordshire AL2 3EB

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Although Common Coots *Fulica atra* have been recorded feeding avidly on goose droppings, as well as on those of gulls *Larus* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 410; 76: 410-411), this behaviour appears to be less frequent among other species. It has been noted for Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*, while a Moorhen was seen to feed on Canada Goose droppings and, on two occasions, on gull droppings (*Brit. Birds* 76: 410-411).

NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY WENDY DICKSON AND BOB SCOTT

How many birds are there?

'Decisions often have to be made about which species of bird are most in need of conservation action. The basis for these decisions and the effectiveness of resulting conservation measures can only be judged by monitoring the numbers and distribution of the species in question. The task of monitoring the United Kingdom's birds and translating this monitoring information into conservation action is a huge one.'

So says the opening paragraph of the introduction to a long-awaited, fascinating and totally practical publication: *Bird Monitoring Methods* by Gillian Gilbert, David Gibbons and Julianne Evans. This was just what I (BS) wanted (but didn't have!) when I was attempting a wide range of monitoring as a young, inexperienced field naturalist. Yet again, the RSPB has published in association with other conservation bodies (namely the BTO, the WWT, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology and The Seabird Group), importantly a mix of statutory and voluntary organisations. If you want to

know how to census European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata*, Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* or any of the other 83 individual species covered, you will find the answers here. A further 50 species are dealt with in a section on generic monitoring methods.

This work should be comprehensive and authoritative: there are some three pages of small print acknowledging the involvement of field-workers throughout the UK who have commented on the text for particular species or groups of species. I am sure that there will be comments, even criticism, but here is a set of techniques that can be replicated anywhere in the UK and will, over a period of time, provide sets of comparable data. For anyone interested in bird populations and census work, this must be the most useful publication ever to have appeared. *Bird Monitoring Methods: a manual of techniques for key UK species* is available from the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, price £17.50, plus £2.60 p&p (UK).

Manx Shearwater enthusiasts

Some preliminary work is being undertaken for a possible Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* workshop to be held in Funchal, Madeira, in late September 1999. If you are at all interested, contact Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves - Madeira (SPEA), Rua das Murças 4, 3º Andar, Sala-A, 9000 Funchal, Madeira, Portugal. Tel/Fax: +351-91-241210, e-mail: mailto:speamad@mail.telepac.pt

National Exhibition of Wildlife Art

During 2nd-18th April 1999, at the Road Range Gallery, Mann Island, Pier Head, Liverpool, there will be what is claimed as the 'largest exhibition of wildlife art outside London'. Further details from David Wilson, Leighton House, Mill Lane, Willaston, South Wirral L64 1RQ, tel: 0151-327-3710.

Kidnapped

Under this stark heading the Editor-in-Chief, Tim Gallagher, of *Living Bird* recounts the story of four American birders and their frightening experiences in Colombia. The story is a warning to all world-travelling birders from whatever country. You may say 'avoid Colombia', but these days there seems to be a steadily decreasing area of the globe where life is

totally safe. At times that desire for yet another rare bird has to be ignored. In the Colombian case it was Cundimarca Antpitta *Grallaria kaestneri*, a species first discovered in 1989 and confined to the central mountains of Colombia, as are the guerilla fighters with the 'Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia'.

Living Bird is published by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, USA.

Italian hunters in Bulgaria

Occasionally we hear some news that makes us not only extremely angry, but also somewhat sick. The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) has recently been working closely with Bulgarian authorities at Varna airport identifying the corpses of over 18,000 birds of 23 species. These included Corn Crane *Crex crex*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*. In all,

over 700 kg of dead birds were confiscated from a party of 34 Italian hunters which had been on a shooting trip to Bulgaria. Under Bulgarian law, the potential fines for killing these protected species amount to £110,000. Let us hope that the authorities impose the maximum-possible fine. If you wish to know more about the BSPB, contact BSPB (UK), 8 Woodlands, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1UE.

Brasher Boot Co. and Snowdon

With The National Trust having raised the £3 million needed to buy the southern flank of Snowdon, money is now being sought to fund the upkeep of the area. The newest sponsor of our Young Ornithologists of the Year, The Brasher Boot Co., has, through The Chris Brasher Trust, offered to match, pound for pound, all contributions raised by the British Mountaineering Council. The Chris Brasher Trust has already made a donation of £200,000. Anyone wishing to contribute or to learn more should contact The British Mountaineering Council 'Brasher Challenge', 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB.

Richard Fitter honoured

The Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the umbrella body of the Wildlife Trusts, has presented R. S. R. Fitter with its prestigious Christopher Cadbury Medal for 'services to the advancement of nature conservation'. A long-standing *BB* subscriber, Richard will perhaps be best known to our readers as author of the pioneering *The Pocket Guide to British Birds* (1952), which was illustrated by the late Richard Richardson, and the series of papers on breeding Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* in Britain (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 58: 481-492; 64: 117-124; 69: 9-15). We are delighted to congratulate Richard Fitter on this honour.

Declines the result of survival, not breeding performance

The BTO has recently concluded some analysis of the data which members and other field-workers have been gathering over the years. In particular, it has been looking at those species that have undergone dramatic declines in recent years. The broad conclusions are that breeding performance has not declined (i.e. conditions must be suitable for the rearing of young), but that survival rates have fallen

(i.e. the birds are not doing so well outside the nesting period). Clearly, nothing is quite so straightforward as this and within these broad statements there are bound to be subtle variations among species. It is, however, increasingly looking as if the ability to survive autumn, winter and early spring may have been lost. Are we back to the old problem created by autumn-sowing (rather than spring-sowing)?

Nature Kenya

If you have birded in the game parks of East Africa, you are probably familiar with the East Africa Natural History Society (EANHS), its logo of a Long-crested Eagle *Lophaelus occipitalis* and its periodicals that include *Scopus* and the standard reference bird and mammal checklists. Since 1997, EANHS has been the BirdLife International partner in Kenya and has been tackling many of the country's conservation problems as well as developing the scientific data base and promoting wildlife through an education programme.

EANHS will have a name change to NatureKenya, with a new constitution

and eight full-time staff working, from a fully equipped office, on a strong conservation programme. The list of topics for the future ranges from surveys, ecological studies and a nest record scheme to establishing local support groups, producing educational materials for schools and training bird guides to aid tourism. NatureKenya has three immediate key challenges: the establishment of a membership base, a sustainable approach to wildlife in Kenya, and all the institutional issues that operating as a non-government organisation in Kenya will present. Nature-Kenya can be supported at National Museums of Kenya, Department of Ornithology, PO Box 44486, Nairobi, Kenya.

Málaga bird records needed

Records are needed to complement the weekly and monthly censuses carried out at the various lakes of Campillos, La Ratoa and Fuente de Piedra in Málaga province, Spain. Any data from October 1989 to the present day are needed (in Voous order please) and should include date, site (as specific as possible), species and numbers, with age/sex where possible. Information should be

sent to José Miguel Ramírez González, RN Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, Apto de Correos 1, 29520 Fuente de Piedra, Málaga, Spain.

There were 13,000 Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* chicks in the area last summer, and two new breeding species were recorded: Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* and Gadwall *Anas strepera*.

Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda

In 1992, one of us (BS) was fortunate enough to visit the Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda, an area of some 970 km² of montane forest with over 275 species of birds, of which 25 are endemic to the region. Not long after our visit, Rwanda slipped into the most horrendous civil war and the future of the country's wildlife areas and conservation programmes was obviously in doubt. We have recently seen a copy of *Backbone*, the newsletter of the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS), with a contribution from Dr Beth Kaplin of the Antioch New England Graduate School,

USA. She re-visited the forest in July 1998 and reports that the trail systems for tourism appear to have been well maintained in the years since the civil war. The well-trained research field assistants have continued to conduct research in the forest, despite the many problems they have suffered, including periods without salary or contact with external collaborators, not to mention the instability and insecurity within the forest. There is a new office and tourist interpretative centre. The ultimate success of conservation efforts can be achieved only when the region resolves its political conflicts, but in the meantime much work continues within this quite amazing central African forest. ARCOS, c/o WCMC, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

New facilities at Loch Garten

One winter several years ago, in an act of gross vandalism, the RSPB's visitor facilities at Loch Garten were burned to the ground. This was not the first time that the reserve had been targeted by someone with a grudge against the RSPB. The reserve staff were quick to create a 'temporary' facility so as not to disappoint the thousands of visitors who make an almost pilgrim-like visit to see the Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* each year. Those temporary facilities have had to last several years, but we now hear that brand-new facilities will be opened on the site in June 1999. Included for the first time will be visitor toilets. 'About time, too', we hear many regulars cry. Unfortunately, few people are aware of all the complications and difficulties that arise when visitor facilities are planned for remote areas. There is probably a lack of services, there are planning consents and permissions to obtain, and there is the cost, not just of the capital building work, but of the ongoing maintenance year after year.

The National Trust and birds of prey

In 1989, the National Trust prohibited falconry and displays of falconry on its property in order to protect birds of prey, in the belief that such displays encouraged the taking of birds from the wild. The Trust now believes that recent scientific advances, which allow DNA-testing to distinguish between birds bred in captivity and those taken in the wild, mean they can revise their policy. Licences for falconry will now be granted on Trust property where this has been a traditional practice in the past and where the Trust is satisfied that there is no local conflict with the Trust's other objectives. The licence conditions for both displays and falconry will require licensees to promote good conservation practice as agreed by the Trust. This could well be a sign that the illegal element of falconry is now under control. Further details from National Trust, 36 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AS.

BirdLife's Threatened Species checklists

BirdLife International has produced a checklist of all 1,111 threatened species of birds in the World. Each species is listed with its threat category and an indication of where it occurs in the World. Each checklist includes a form on which details of sightings of threatened species can be sent to BirdLife to add to their records. It is hoped that as many birders as possible will purchase a copy of the checklist and use the form to

send in their records of threatened species. In this simple way birders will be helping to provide valuable data and information for BirdLife's threatened species programme, focus of last year's British Birdwatching Fair.

Checklists cost £2 from Communications, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, tel. 01223 277318, fax 01223 277200, e-mail birdlife@birdlife.org.uk

Free-flying Budgies and others

If you visit Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire, you will find, hidden away between a tall hedge and a wall, an aviary containing some 30-40 Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus*, descendants from the once-famous free-flying population established by the 12th Duke of Bedford in the 1920s. The activities of Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* have apparently necessitated their confinement to the aviary, but plans apparently now exist to return the birds to a free-flying state 'when conditions are suitable'.

Woburn is not the only site in the country

that has (or plans to have) free-flying birds that return to an aviary each night. Private collections from Cumbria to Surrey have a range of parrot species free-flying. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is, however, an offence to release or allow to escape into the wild any animal which is not ordinarily resident in or a regular visitor to Great Britain. The maximum penalty for this offence is a fine of £5,000 per specimen. If staff at Woburn were to release 30 Budgerigars, they could potentially face a fine of £150,000.

Spanish BBS

The JNCC/RSPB/BTO annual Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is now a well-established part of the monitoring programme of British birds. Well over 2,000 1-km squares are now surveyed annually, and the programme has operated for five years.

In 1996, the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO) started SACRE (Bird Monitoring Scheme in Spain), now funded by the RSPB.

The Spanish report makes interesting reading. The five most widespread species in 1997 were Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (recorded in 93% of surveyed squares), House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (91%),

European Serin *Serinus serinus* (88%), Common Swift *Apus apus* (84%) and Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* (84%). The same five species are among the top six most abundant species, where they are joined by Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*. Although the authors stress the need for caution as the sample size is still small, they do make some comparisons with 1996. Statistically, very high increases were noted for Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* and feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*. Only Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* showed any evidence of a decrease.

Details of the British BBS from BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU; of the Spanish SACRE from SEO, Ctra. Húmera 63-1, 28224 Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid, Spain.

News of former YOY

The year 1998 was good for Matthew Harding (intermediate winner of the title Young Ornithologist of the Year in 1996, and senior winner in 1997, *Brit. Birds* 89: 539-541; 90: 535-537). His main achievement was that he started training as a bird-ringer. That was not entirely unconnected with a two-week visit at the end of July to Fair Isle Bird Observatory, courtesy in part of the John Harrison Memorial Fund. One result of this is that his most-ringed bird became European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates*

pelagicus. He also saw – and ringed – his first Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and found the whole visit a wonderful experience. In between, he has continued with several BTO surveys, his long-term volunteering for the RSPB and his schoolwork. Now looking forward to summer 1999, just after his seventeenth birthday, he is going on a month's expedition to the Indian Himalayas, for which he is actively fundraising. He says 'All donations gratefully received'.

Sustainable conservation needs money

We have previously (*Brit. Birds* 91: 260) reported on the creation of shelters for nestling Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. The RSPB has reported that 1998 was the most successful year ever for this colony. The number of fledged young from the 216 nesting pairs reached about 350, with the new shelters limiting the losses resulting from predation by Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* to only 80-100 chicks. The national population of Little Terns is fewer than 2,500 pairs.

The RSPB has also reported that the breeding population of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus* in Britain reached 206 pairs in 1998. It has, therefore, achieved its national target of 200 nesting pairs, a target that was set for the year 2000. One of the key factors in the return of the Stone-curlew has been RSPB employees working closely with farmers to safeguard crop-nesting pairs. Nests are found, marked, and protected from damage by agricultural operations.

Two highly successful operations that are to be applauded, but how sustainable are they for the future?

The Little Tern operation employs three wardens and 34 volunteers to protect the colony from disturbance by (for example) dogs and human beings. The Stone-curlew operation needs teams of field-workers locating nests and communicating with the farmers. Can either scheme go on for ever?

Currently, if either were to cease operating, the population would collapse rapidly. It is probably doubtful if there is an alternative option. Both schemes cost money and would not be possible without financial assistance from a range of sources. RSPB members contribute a substantial sum; Government money comes from English Nature and the Ministry of Agriculture's Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme in Breckland; industry in the form of ARCO, an international energy company, and Concept Research, makers of 'Catwatch' deterrents, both contribute; and, of course, landowners make a considerable contribution by allowing it all to happen. Conservation of such rare breeding species can be 'sustainable' only if the money supply is 'sustainable'.

No money, no Little Terns, no Stone-curlews.

Houbara Bustard conservation makes progress

Some researchers have argued that the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* should be split between the African population *C. undulata* and the Asian population *C. macqueenii* (*Ibis* 138: 273). While the grounds for such a split are perhaps still insufficient, what is unquestionable is the bustard's value and indeed notoriety as the traditional quarry of Arab falconers. Since the early 1960s, traditional camel-back falconry has been transformed by the development of modern transport and communications, and the increased availability of falcons (both wild-caught and captive-bred hybrids). The efficiency and intensity of hunting have increased considerably, to the detriment of local populations of Houbaras, especially in Arabia and the Middle East. As a result, falconers have begun hunting in other countries in Asia and North Africa, much to the alarm of conservationists in these areas. The current World population is estimated at some 49,000 birds, but there has been a considerable decline during the current century, the result of hunting, agricultural intensification and other land-use changes.

The Houbara's future is probably best served by acknowledging the conservation benefits that would accrue from its wise use as a quarry species and by establishing a sustainable management system through an agreement under the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Since the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature held a meeting in Muscat, Oman, in 1996 (attended by 13 states from within the Houbara's range), considerable progress has been made. Research has included the satellite-tracking of a bird that covered 6,600 km in 54 days. Released in Abu Dhabi, it crossed Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to summer in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Eight months later, the bird was

back in Abu Dhabi.

Impetus for an international, binding agreement on the joint management of the Houbara Bustard is now being led by Saudi Arabia, which seeks to ensure that the species' habitats are conserved and that any hunting is conducted on a sustainable basis. A draft agreement is now ready for distribution. The Bonn Convention Secretariat expects the agreement and a species action plan to be formally distributed by the end of April this year. The spotlight is now falling on the North African populations. In Morocco, there have been significant investments in captive-breeding centres, seeking to restore locally reduced populations. King Hassan deserves congratulations for creating a substantial Royal Game Sanctuary on the Tamlelt Plain, aimed at conserving wild Houbara populations. Perhaps the time has come for the five Maghreb countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia) to follow the example of the Asian-range states and consider how the conservation tools of the Bonn Convention can be applied as successfully in their region. The Bustard Specialist Group, c/o The Nature Conservation Bureau, 36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury RG14 5SJ.

CONTRIBUTED BY PAUL GORIUP

Ted Smith CBE

In addition to those honours already noted (*Brit. Birds* 92: 109), we are delighted that long-standing subscriber Ted Smith, Chairman of the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, was created a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year Honours List. (We thank Martin H. Broadbridge for drawing our attention to this.)

LETTERS

SINGLE-OBSERVER FIRST-FOR-BRITAIN RECORDS

For most records of rare birds there is a mass of corroborative evidence. Many birders, usually including some familiar with the species, see the bird; many photographs are taken and sometimes video recordings are made; artists draw exquisite sketches. The data overwhelmingly confirm that this particular bird was where it was, when it was and what it was.

A 100% identification might consist of 20% using one criterion, 30% another and 50% a third, or any ratio/combination you care to think of, but the bird itself has to be 100%. Any doubt, and it must be considered a UFO. Fraudulent records are not unknown, 'the Hastings Rarities' being one exceptional case (*Brit. Birds* 55: 281-384). Cheats are found in every sphere of human activity, and birding is no different. For a single-observer record, I suggest that the only sure way is to assume guilt before innocence.

Any single-observer rare-bird record should be subjected to the most exacting scrutiny. This is, in the UK, one of the important functions of the British Birds Rarities Committee. If the bird is an extreme rarity, a first for Britain, or a first for the Western Palearctic, the evidence from a single observer can in my view *never* be sound enough, and the record must not be added to the official lists. This does not, of course, mean that the record need not be submitted; it should. I believe that a new system is needed to log these special events and to build up a history of these potentially important sightings. This new status may well allow some 'single observers', who, on the grounds of being ridiculed, would previously have decided not to submit their records at all, to do so. Any first recorded sighting details a species seen for the first time; we can usually feel

confident that this event is confirmation that, probably, small numbers of the species have visited our islands in the past, although they were not observed. The record confirms that the bird does get here. What are the odds that the first bird seen is the very first one of its species to get here? The evidence suggests that the chances are about one in three (*Brit. Birds* 90: 297).

How many 'firsts' for the Western Palearctic and/or Britain were recorded by only a single observer? It cannot be many. No doubt much time, thought, experience and effort were spent on their ratification. Now is the time to set out, discuss, decide and agree on a new framework for these isolated, important situations so that they can be satisfactorily recorded.

There has been a five-fold increase in the number of records of rarities recorded annually since the BBRC was formed in 1958 (about 100 records of species on today's BBRC's list in 1958 compared with over 500 in 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 455-517). Doubtless, increasing numbers will be found in the future. 'Firsts' for Britain will occur, and some will only ever be seen by one person. Any such records must not be lost from the system, but in my view should not go onto the British List. I suggest that the right place for these records, until such time as there is at least a second acceptable report of the species, is Category D, or an equivalent 'pending' pigeonhole.

Terry Atkinson
46 Temple Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1HT

IRELAND STILL LOVES YOU

In common with all Irish birders that I know, my interest in ornithology owes a significant debt to British birdwatchers. Your field guides and journals were our identification training manuals, and British pioneers broke huge amounts of ground over here. The roll of honour is a long one,

as is the list of places put on the map thanks to the intrepid British birders – Cape Clear, Saltee and Tory islands are but three hot-spots that spring to mind. Consequently, I felt ashamed to read J. T. R. Sharrock's editorial (*Brit. Birds* 92: 62-63) about the state of British and Irish ornithological relations which has the seeds of serious political rift, if not already the plant of scientific farce. I agree with almost everything that he says (except where he implies that British twitchers might welcome a reason not to travel to Ireland to see rare birds – several recent rarities have been comparatively 'cheap' to twitch in Ireland compared with, say, having to fund a trip to the Northern Isles) – and wish to stress that there has always been a separate Irish List and that Britain and Ireland are pretty much a coherent biogeographic unit: especially when migration and the occurrence of rarities are the focus of the interest.

So, why has there been a disruption of late, with the IBRC proclaiming the unadulterated Irishness of the national list and not only instructing *British Birds*, the BBRC and the BOU to respect Irish sovereignty, but also refusing to supply material that was previously made available? The kindest explanation for this action is that the IBRC has misconstrued British interest in Irish ornithology as some kind of colonial claim of domination. That it patently is not. In my view, it is simply a desire on the part of BB, the BBRC, the BOU and many visiting British observers to see the unity of the historical occurrence patterns maintained, not fragmented.

In this purpose, the British parties have always acted in a benign and helpful way – to the benefit of all and, in my opinion, especially to the benefit of Ireland, by its inclusion in published data. It goes without saying, therefore, that I applaud BB's restated intention to continue to publish Irish records. Could I add that I find the IBRC's conduct over this matter to be confused and confusing, to the point of attracting ridicule from impartial witnesses

to the Irish birding scene. Its decision to 'go it alone' from a British and Irish partnership was taken without any referral to the rank and file of the Irish birdwatching community. In the aftermath of the IBRC's secret discussions and, thus, partial decisions, Northern Ireland's observers held a well-attended public meeting and, somewhat reluctantly, are now assessing their own national rarities – formerly these records were passed to the IBRC.

I cannot speak for anyone but myself, but I feel that I am far from alone in observing that, as currently constituted, the IBRC risks identification as an entrenched clique whose behaviour, however presumably well intended, is actually hampering an adventurous all-Ireland ornithology and actively preventing the easy assimilation of the unique Irish dimension into the science of the most productive bird observatory in the Northern Hemisphere: Ireland and Britain together. The World's search for a model ornithological bureaucracy is incomplete, but in Ireland an increased measure of grass-roots democracy – if only in the regular rotation of IBRC membership – is urgently needed. We do not have to copy the British system, but we would do well to remember that, even with its imperfections, it has been adopted as best practice across the globe.

Anthony McGeehan

75 Lyndhurst Avenue, Bangor BT19 1AY

EDITORIAL: BRITAIN & IRELAND

Your editorial (*Brit. Birds* 92: 62-63) referred to the British Ornithologists' Union decision to omit Irish records from the British and Irish List. You suggested that this decision may have been influenced by pressure from British twitchers and Irish birdwatchers. A number of factors were involved in the decision, but such pressures, if any had existed, were not among the BOU's considerations.

The decision was prompted by a request from the Irish Rare Birds Committee, which wrote to the BOU Records Committee in

December 1996 to ask us to cease maintaining a British and Irish list, as this was a concept which they believed was no longer appropriate. The IRBC was at pains to point out that its decision did not in itself represent a split or a lack of co-operation between the two bodies, and emphasised the excellent relationship which existed between us. In its view, there was a logical progression because of the evolution of thinking on the maintenance of national lists in a European context.*

At the same time, there was mounting pressure from United Kingdom conservation agencies and bodies for the establishment of definitive lists for each of the four 'home countries', and national government, through the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, was seeking our assistance in producing a purely British List. An overriding requirement was to assist with conservation and wildlife legislation, there being different legal frameworks in England and Wales, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. The Isle of Man asked to be included at this stage. The Republic of Ireland could clearly not be included.

The outcome is fully described in 'The British List: new categories and their relevance to conservation', published in your journal in January/February 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 2-11). This includes a lengthy paragraph describing the changes to the handling and publication of Irish records. The resulting separation of the British and Irish Lists has met with widespread approval and, to my knowledge, no complaints.

The merits of a separate British List can best be summed up by my quoting from the abstract of the paper referred to above: 'A scientifically credible list is needed for listing purposes and so that conservation organisations have an objective baseline from which to work. This is essential for legal casework, for ensuring common standards in reporting on the state of biodiversity, and especially for providing advice to Government on strengthening the law regarding the release and escape of bird species'.

Tony Marr

Chairman, BOU Records Committee, Two Hoots, Old Hall Farm Barns, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7SF

* As a matter of fact, the IRBC did not advocate a Republic of Ireland List, but an All-Ireland List. Eds.



MONTHLY MARATHON



47. Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Germany, November 1985 (*Axel Hailey*)

As is so often the case with a good mystery photograph, the 'mystery' in plate 22 (repeated here as plate 47) is largely a matter of the bird being shown from an angle that conceals or obscures most of the diagnostic features which, in real life, would become obvious as the bird turns. It is difficult to judge wing shape or the wing-length to tail-length ratio, and the deep shadow virtually eliminates any distinctive markings that there may be on the underbody, underwings or tail. So, if the conspicuous whitish spot at each carpal joint and the pale leading edge to the 'arm' did not immediately proclaim the bird's identity, there are not too many other features to go on. It is all too easy to jump to conclusions: Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* has conspicuous white 'landing-lights' on the forewing, but they are located at the base of the wing rather than half-way out. Furthermore, even the smallest of eagles has a somewhat more powerful-looking bill than does this raptor. The bird looks as though it is about to commence hovering, so maybe it is a tricky photo of a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*? No, not with those 'long-fingered' primaries on the bird's right wing. This leaves the various harriers *Circus*, buzzards *Buteo* and kites *Milvus* to be considered. All 'ring-tail' harriers have a more contrasting face pattern than that shown by

the mystery bird, with conspicuous pale eye-crescents and a dark cheek patch. The comparatively plain head and pale leading edge to the wing may bring male Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* to mind, but they, too, tend to show more pale at the base of the forearm than at the carpal. Even allowing for the awkward angle of view, a Red *M. milvus* or Black Kite *M. migrans* would almost always show some hint of the characteristic forked tail shape as well as more-arched wings. This leaves us with 'just' the buzzards, which exhibit a veritable galaxy of age-related and sex-related plumage variations and morphs. Fortunately, however, only one species tends to show a narrow light leading edge to the arm, which often terminates as a prominent spot just inside the carpal: Rough-legged Buzzard *B. lagopus*. Not all individuals exhibit this feature, however, and the carpal spot seems to be more a feature of juveniles than of adults, but, when present, it is a good indicator of Rough-legged Buzzard.

Two-thirds of competitors (including the leader, Peter Lansdown) correctly named this bird as a Rough-legged Buzzard.

KILLIAN MULLARNEY

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



48. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 152. Thirteenth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1999.



RARITIES COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT

IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF RECORDS

Following the decision of the BOURC to promote Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii* to specific status (*Brit. Birds* 91: 89), the BBRC discussed how best to assess records of this species, which has been reported in Britain on several occasions in the past.

Currently, there seems no conclusive way of identifying non-singing individuals in the field, although there is a suggestion that differentiation by call may be possible, for birders very familiar with the calls of all this group (*Brit. Birds* 91: 376).

Because of the difficulty in describing differences between similar songs, and the fact that there is evidence of 'mixed singing', with birds including components of the song of both Iberian Chiffchaff and Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, we shall, at the moment, consider records of Iberian Chiffchaff only if the song has been taped and forms part of the submission. We encourage observers to record potential candidates so that the field characteristics and patterns of occurrence can be defined.

Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth,
Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



RECENT REPORTS

COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

This summary of unchecked reports covers 8th February to 7th March 1999. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Long-stayers at Nanjizal (Cornwall) to 12th February; Tresco (Scilly) to at least 6th March; Cosmeston Lake Country Park (South Glamorgan), 14th February to 6th March; Singleton Lake, Ashford (Kent), 27th February to 7th March. **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* Lynn Point (Norfolk), 14th-18th February. **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* Pale-phase adult, Rogerstown (Co. Dublin), 6th March. **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus*

delawarensis Ten, Nimmo's Pier (Co. Galway), late February. **American Herring Gull** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* First-winters, Killybegs, Co. Donegal, and Newport Dump (Co. Mayo), from early February to at least 7th March. **Caspian Gull** *L. cachinnans cachinnans* Adult, Derry Dump (Co. Londonderry), 12th-18th February. **Thayer's Gull** *L. (glaucoides) thayeri* First-winter, Newport Dump, until at least 3rd March. **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* Wick (Highland), 8th-9th February. **Kumlien's Gull** *L. (g.) kumlieni* Three, Killybegs, mid-February to early March. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Hamford Water (Essex), about 18th February to 7th March.



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49. Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* of race *nigricans*, Wells, Norfolk, February 1999 (John Harriman)



50. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of the nominate race, which is often referred to as Caspian Gull, Eel Pie Island, Twickenham, Middlesex, January 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



51. Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Ashford, Kent, March 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



52. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Hamford Water, Essex, February 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



53. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Banks Marsh, Lancashire, February 1999 (Steve Young)



54. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*, of one of the smaller races, with Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Holkham, Norfolk, February 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



55. European Serin *Serinus serinus*, Hounslow, Middlesex, February 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



56. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Aber Ogwen, North Wales, February 1999 (Gary Bellingham)



57. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Martin Mere, Lancashire, February 1999 (Steve Young)



58. Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Mere Sands Wood, Lancashire, February 1999 (Steve Young)

RECENT BBRC DECISIONS




This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/feae* Newbiggin-on-Sea (Northumberland), 24th August. **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Graveney Marshes (Kent), 7th-8th October. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Fetlar (Shetland), 10th July; Campfield Marsh (Cumbria), 19th September. **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* Graveney and Nagden Marshes (Kent), 8th-19th October. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Rutland Water (Leicestershire), 7th-19th November. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Welney (Norfolk), 12th September to 4th November. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Welney (Norfolk) 12th September to 4th November. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Baddam and Hillwell (Shetland), 17th March to 2nd August. **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 25th September; St Margaret's (Kent), 18th-

19th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Fair Isle (Shetland), 20th-29th September; Whitby (North Yorkshire), 26th September; Minsmere (Suffolk), 4th October. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Tynemouth (Northumberland), 8th-14th December. **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus* Fetlar (Shetland), 30th April to 1st May. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* Maidenhead (Berkshire), 26th December to 1999. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Phenicus ludovicianus* Bryher (Scilly), 30th October to 1st November.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

CORRECTION

The South Wales record of Laughing Gull *Larus pipixcan* (Brit. Birds 92: 170) should have read Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*. 



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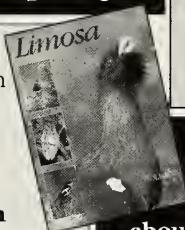
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THOSE RUDDY DUCKS - AGAIN!

In the light of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) report on the pilot control scheme for the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* (Anon. 1998), the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, decided to announce the go-ahead for regional trials to assess the feasibility of eradicating the Ruddy Duck from Britain. The purpose of these comments is to review that decision and its consequences from a scientific and political standpoint. There are also animal-welfare issues, which are best addressed elsewhere.

In many ways, the evidence in favour of a Ruddy Duck cull is overwhelming and incontrovertible, as has been summarised previously (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 87: 394-395; *BTO News* 193: 10). The conservation of the White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* in Europe is one of the big ongoing conservation successes of recent years: 1,164 were found in a census in Spain in 1997, having increased from just 22 individuals in 1973. Now, the White-headed Duck, as we know it, is threatened by hybridisation with the expanding populations of the Ruddy

Duck, an alien, introduced species, and this jeopardises all the good work which has gone into the conservation of Europe's native *Oxyura* species.

A recent Press release from the RSPB, however, quotes Dr Mark Avery: 'The RSPB believes that the conservation of the White-headed Duck is a very high priority and ignoring the problem which Ruddy Ducks pose will inevitably lead to the extinction of the species.' I find this statement a misleading oversimplification, which may well be how the RSPB feels it has to sell the cull to its members, and maybe even to its staff, but which needs closer scrutiny from ornithological and genetic standpoints. As pointed out by Steven Gregory (*Brit. Birds* 90: 150-151), it is ironic that the future for some sort of *Oxyura* duck in Europe is probably rosier now than at any time in postglacial history. The cull of Ruddy Ducks must be analysed as a biodiversity issue, in particular in deciding what must be done best to preserve the characteristics and genetic diversity of White-headed Ducks. If (and this is a big and unquantified



59 & 60. Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Essex (Robin Chittenden): left, adult female, March 1995; right, male, April 1995.



61 & 62. White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala*, Spain, May 1994 (Mike Lane): left, adult male; right, female.

‘if’) it is true that hybrids of the two *Oxyura* ducks in Europe are fertile even after several generations, and bearing in mind that we know nothing of the long-term fitness and sexual attractiveness of the hybrids in comparison with their parent species, then what does the future hold? We do not know. A large, interbreeding ‘super-species’ population of Ruddy and White-headed Ducks could be either good or bad for both or either species. Both are derived from populations which were at critically low levels in Europe only a few years ago (White-headed through hunting and habitat degradation; Ruddy since only a small number had escaped, although, of course, it is common in the New World, whence the ancestors of the captive birds originated). The increase in effective population size which would result from White-headed Ducks freely interbreeding with Ruddies would stabilise and bolster the genetic diversity of both, potentially adding to their evolutionary potential and reinforcing their ability to respond to future environmental change.

Shrewd opponents of the cull would argue that, for the reasons outlined above, there need be no loss of biodiversity, as defined at its correct, genetic, level, from free interbreeding of the two species. I regard this as outrageously complacent. It fails to take

into account that, when a ‘European population of more than 4,000 *jamaicensis* interbreeds with a much smaller population of *leucocephala*, there is a danger that the genetic contribution of *leucocephala* will be swamped. Furthermore, it ignores the fact that we know nothing of the fitness of Ruddy Ducks or their hybrid progeny in the rather difficult climatic conditions which characterise the current Iberian home of the White-headed Duck. There is one ‘disaster scenario’: we can assume that Ruddy Ducks may not be so well adapted to the Iberian environment as White-headed Ducks have become, and indeed may not be able to sustain viable populations there. But, if uncontrolled successive waves of sexually aggressive male Ruddies overspill into the range of the White-headed Duck from a rapidly increasing northern European population, then there is a real danger that the White-headed Ducks will not be able to maintain the favourable gene linkage and allelic combinations which have evolved over millions of years to enable them to survive in Iberia, eastern Europe and southwestern Asia. We *could* lose the White-headed Duck.

Therein lies the problem – the future of the White-headed Duck in a Palearctic Region overrun with Ruddies is uncertain, but to say that it ‘will inevitably lead to extinction’ is

nonsense. It is more accurate to say that to allow Ruddies to expand uncontrolled is to take a big risk; and perhaps even more so to perform an uncontrolled experiment in evolution, with no idea of the outcome, except that some biological diversity will almost certainly be lost in the short term, and maybe a lot in the long term. For a geneticist, this would be a fascinating thing to study, but, for a concerned conservationist, it may well be argued that the whole issue is one big headache that we could do without. The good news is that we may not have to suffer this headache – there may still be a possibility of eradicating the Ruddy Duck. End of problem! Governments across Europe are at various stages in gearing up to control wandering Ruddy Ducks, and the Spanish Civil Guard shot nine of the 12 Ruddies which were spotted in that country during 1997. But, statistically, it is highly likely that Britain is still the major source of those *jamaicensis* which are recorded in mainland Europe, and European countries expect us to do something about them. Mainland Italy, for example, has postponed the *leucocephala* reintroduction scheme until the *jamaicensis* situation is stabilised.

The pilot scheme concerning the feasibility of eradicating Ruddy Ducks in Britain showed that it was possible to reduce numbers effectively and safely on sites where permission was granted to shoot. At best, however, permission will be granted at the current time to control Ruddies on only about 60% of the sites where they are known to occur. There may well be logistical, environmental and public-opinion problems with having to go back time and again to sites where Ruddy Ducks can be controlled to mop up the overspill from sites where they cannot. This is why the regional trials announced by Michael Meacher are going ahead – to see whether this strategy can work. If it does not, then the Ruddy Duck may well be here to stay, pending any Parliamentary Amendments which might make its control compulsory.

There is one more word of caution. The whole issue of the Ruddy Duck cull is tied

up with international politics, at all levels. Britain is subject to a number of international conservation agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that countries should 'prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species'. So, in many ways, we in Europe are obliged to work together to get rid of the Ruddy Duck. This kind of argument would be much more impressive if Britain and her European partners were as willing to fulfil all their other obligations under international law. But the re-establishment of lost species and the elimination of aliens will always get a higher priority than they perhaps deserve on the political scene. When faced with a long list of biodiversity actions, many of which are difficult, intangible, expensive and not necessarily in the short-term interests of the economy, politicians and environmental agencies will always tend to jump on easy targets. And the Ruddy Duck is an easy target through which countries can show tangible biodiversity action, with a well-defined 'bad guy' and a measurable end-point. This does not mean that they are unimportant, but, in a Europe where many governments are desperate to be seen to be 'doing something' for the environment without actually disrupting the day-to-day business of their economies, the Ruddy Duck has become a bit of a pariah.

As an aside, it is possible that the Ruddy Duck in Europe already has diagnostic DNA differences from those in the Americas, and as such qualifies as a phylogenetic species. Moreover, it is one of Europe's rarest ducks. So, maybe it should be conserved?

Whichever way one addresses it, the Ruddy Duck issue is not clear-cut, and it is disingenuous of anyone to claim that it is.

MARTIN COLLINSON

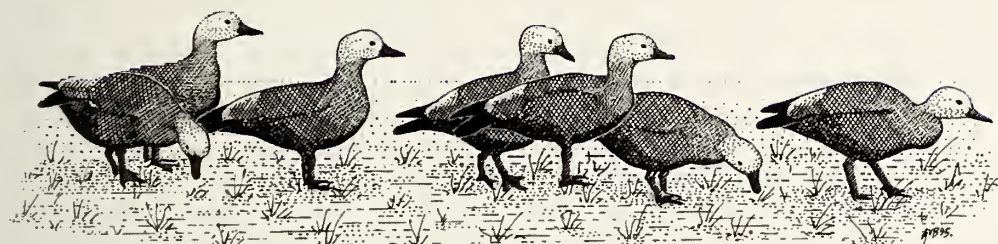
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RUDDY SHELDUCKS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1986-94

K. E. VINICOMBE AND A. H. J. HARROP



Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* (Tony Broome)

ABSTRACT An invasion of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* into Fenno-Scandia in summer 1994 coincided with the occurrence of flocks in Britain. The patterns of the records and status in Europe are documented and discussed in an attempt to determine whether wild birds, escapes from captivity or individuals from feral populations were concerned in these movements.

Rogers (1982) analysed the occurrences of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain during 1965-79. He traced a total of about 123 individuals (eight per annum), roughly two-thirds of which occurred in the second half of the year. There was some increase in spring, from late March to early May, including several instances of two or more together. Most first occurrences, however, took place from early June and in particular from mid July onwards. The largest numbers of individuals (as opposed to records) were present from July to late August, with smaller peaks from September through to the end of November (fig. 1). In late summer and autumn, there was a far higher incidence of groups, with ten reports of three or

more together, including five instances involving five and one flock of eight, all within the period 16th July to 16th October. There was a strong bias towards the Southeast. Of the ten parties of three or more, only three were in the North or West, but these included the largest flock: eight at Llyn Alaw, Anglesey, on 26th July 1979. Only two groups were reported to have contained juveniles. Rogers concluded that the number of records was increasing, probably as a result of a combination of greater observer activity and a larger number of birds wandering from wildfowl collections. There appeared to be no grounds for presuming that any record during at least the previous 50 years related to a wild vagrant. This view was endorsed by the British

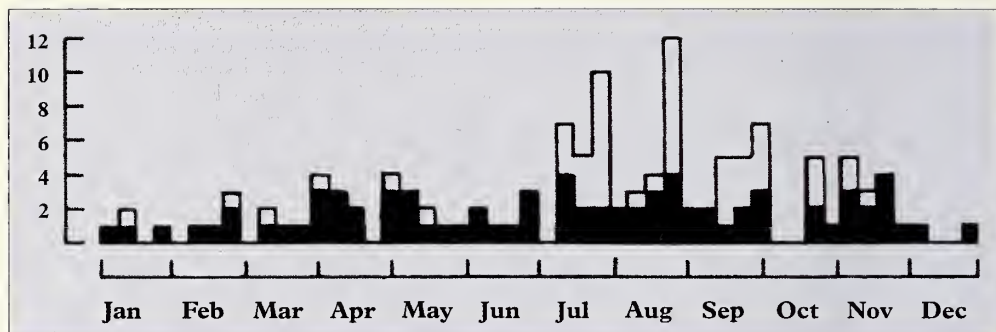


Figure 1. Monthly occurrences of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain in seven-day periods during 1965-79. Number of records, filled columns; extra individuals, open columns. (From Rogers 1982)

Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, and the species currently resides in Category B of the British List.

In recent times, however, there has been a growing suspicion that wild Ruddy Shelducks are still occurring, and this view was given credibility in the summer of 1994 when there was a large and widespread invasion into Fenno-Scandia, involving some 262 individuals. This paper attempts to analyse the current position in Britain and Ireland, with particular reference to the 1994 invasion. KEV collected and analysed the British and Irish records and also data relating to the general occurrence patterns on the Continent. AHJH also collated the Continental information, particularly that relating to 1994, and arranged for a request for information to be placed in the newsletter of the Russian Bird Conservation Union.

METHODS

Obviously, there is no point in analysing the 1994 invasion year in isolation, so this paper deals with the period 1986-93 in comparison with 1994. That period is used simply because the initial records were taken from Pete Fraser's rare-bird and scarce-migrant database, which, for this species, goes back to 1986. Although the Ruddy Shelduck is an obvious and conspicuous bird, it quickly became clear that PF's data were not complete. This is because many observers do not bother to report the species, especially those

individuals which they regard as 'obvious escapes'. In addition, some bird reports have not bothered to publish the records. In an attempt to obtain as many records as possible, KEV wrote to all the county recorders in whose areas Ruddy Shelducks were thought to have occurred during the period. Their response was excellent, and a large number of additional records came to light. Finally, Lee Evans (*in litt.*) provided additional records which he had obtained from the more recently published bird reports. Inevitably, some records will have been missed, but it is unlikely that their absence will have significantly affected the general patterns of occurrence.

The Ruddy Shelduck is a large, colourful and conspicuous duck and it tends to occur in wetland habitats, which are very well covered by birders. Consequently, a few wandering individuals may account for many records. Indeed, the raw data collected comprised records of some 907 individuals, so an attempt had to be made to rationalise these and estimate the true numbers occurring. This was done by dividing Britain and Ireland into eight regions: (1) Scotland, (2) Northeast England, (3) Northwest England and North Wales, (4) the Midlands, (5) Eastern England, (6) Southwest England and South Wales, (7) Southeast England, and (8) Ireland. In each region, the numbers of individuals occurring were estimated, adopting a minimalist approach. Little attempt was

made to correlate movements between regions, unless there were obvious reasons for so doing. For simplicity, the data are presented here in four regions (see also fig. 11 on page 235):

1. Northern Britain: Scotland, northern England and North & West Wales;
2. Southern Britain, subdivided into:
 - a. East and Southeast England;
 - b. Southwestern Britain: the Midlands, Southwest England and South Wales;
3. Ireland.

The above regions may seem arbitrary, but the boundary lines were drawn to take account of marked clusters of records. It seemed desirable not to split such clusters, which involve the same birds moving around. For example, there is a cluster of records around the Wirral, in Cheshire/Lancashire, and records farther north in Lancashire and Cumbria, as well as those in North and West Wales, often relate to birds from this cluster. Also, the patterns of occurrence in northern England are similar to those farther north in Scotland, so it seems sensible to treat this region as one. Similarly, there is another cluster of records around the Severn Estuary, so it makes sense to include the records from South Wales with those from the English Southwest Peninsula. Southern England was subdivided into two,

as the pattern produced in the Southeast by the high proportion of escaped birds, particularly in the London area, was different from that in the Southwest.

In the analysis, no attempt was made to differentiate between those birds considered to have been escapes and those with apparently better credentials as wild individuals.

ANNUAL TOTALS

Fig. 2 shows the annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks estimated in Britain and Ireland during 1986-94. The total number of individuals was 435, an annual average of 48, a marked increase on Rogers's (1982) annual average of eight. His annual totals varied from just one in 1965 to 12 in 1978, whereas during 1986-94 they varied from 23 in 1986 to 62 in both 1992 and 1993.

It is immediately apparent from fig. 2 that, for Britain and Ireland as a whole, 1994 was unexceptional by recent standards. Indeed, it was only the fourth-best year during the period of analysis. In this period, there has been a gradual build-up in numbers, with peak years in 1988 and during 1991-94. From these data, one could draw the surprising conclusion that, given the events in Fenno-Scandia, Britain and Ireland did not experience a significant Ruddy Shelduck influx in 1994.

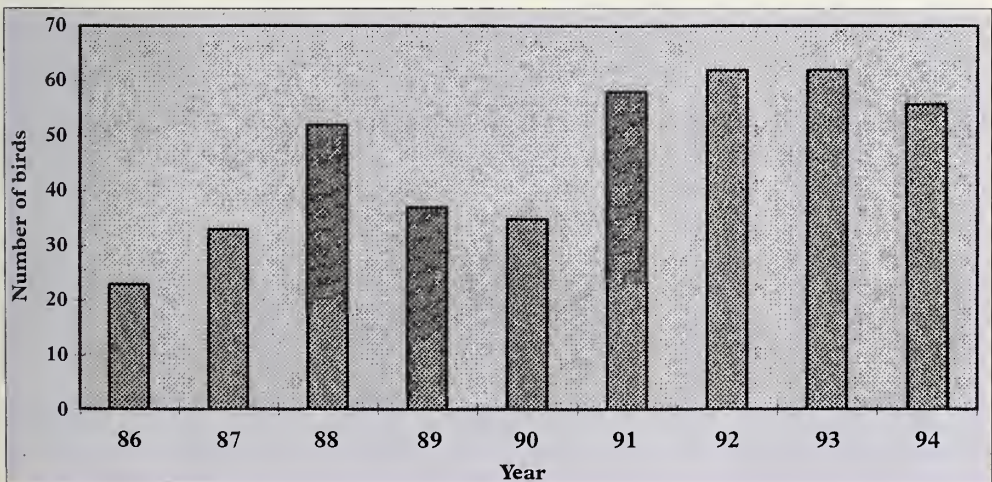


Figure 2. Estimated annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain and Ireland during 1986-94. Note marked upsurge in 1991-94. (Note that a flock of 18 known escapes in Wiltshire in June 1988 has been omitted.)

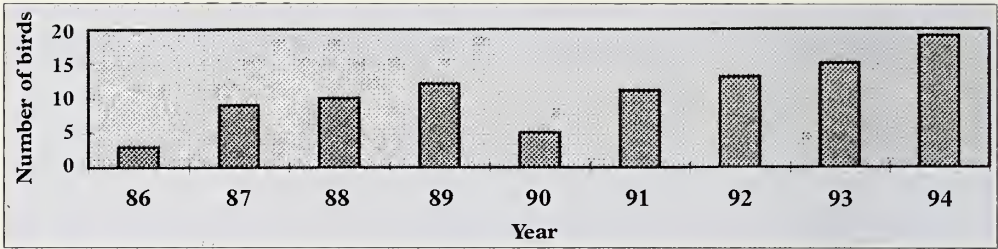


Figure 3. Estimated annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in northern Britain during 1986-94. Note that 1994 was the peak year, coinciding with the invasion into Fenno-Scandia, with a flock of up to 12 in North Wales and on the Wirral, Cheshire/Lancashire.

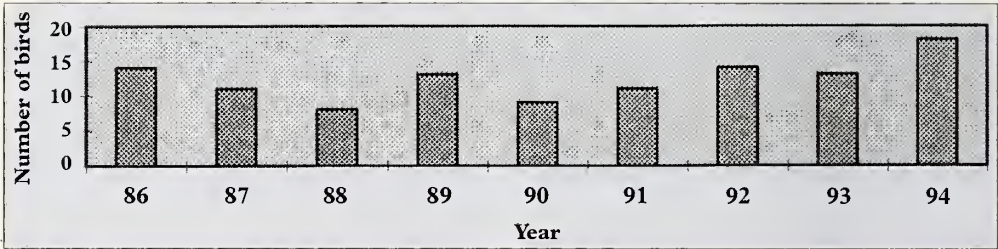


Figure 4. Estimated annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in southwestern Britain during 1986-94. The 1994 peak was produced by two flocks, of five and six in Somerset and Cornwall. (Note that a flock of 18 known escapes in Wiltshire in June 1988 has been omitted.)

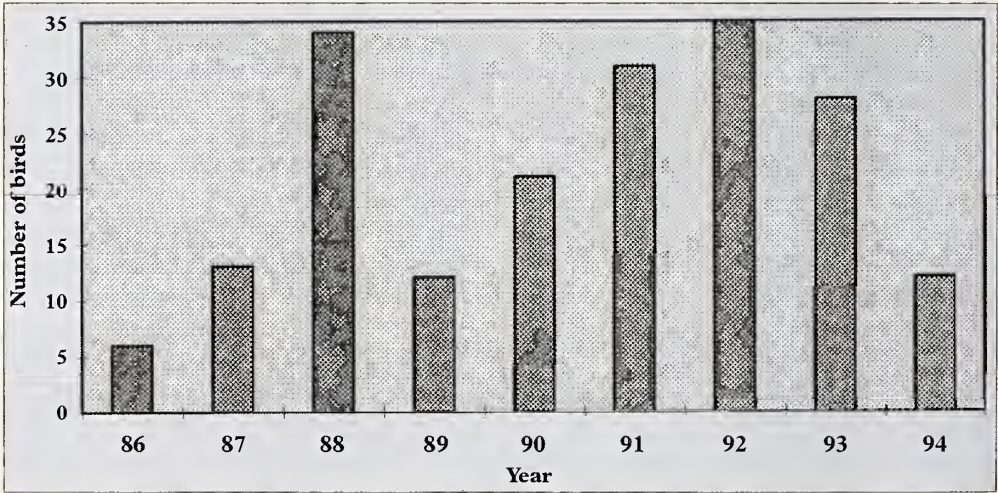


Figure 5. Estimated annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in east and southeast England during 1986-94. This area failed to receive a significant influx in 1994.

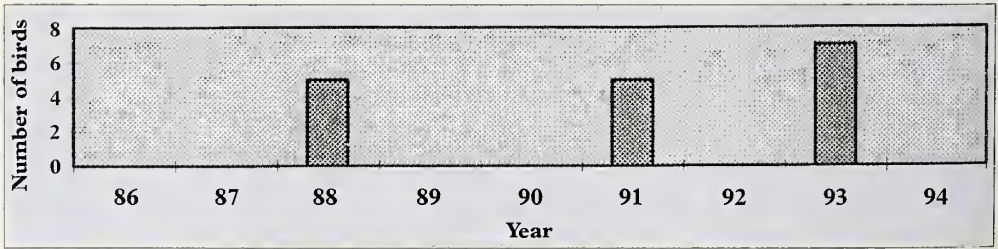


Figure 6. Estimated annual totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Ireland during 1986-94. Surprisingly, none was recorded in 1994.



63. Three Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, October 1994 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

To make more sense of what happened in 1994, it is necessary to analyse the data on a regional basis. The most obvious feature of the 1994 invasion in continental Europe was that it affected the north and not the south. Few Ruddy Shelducks were noted south of Denmark, with the exception of a flock of 20 in the Netherlands. If one supposes for the moment that the invasion originated in southeast Europe and/or southwestern Asia, then the movement had a strong northwesterly orientation. This meant that Britain and Ireland were too far to the southwest to have caught the brunt of it. It is surely significant that the largest numbers (19) occurred in the northern half of Britain (fig. 3), due to an unprecedented concentration of up to 12 in the Wirral (Broome 1995), a flock of four which moved up the East Coast from Lincolnshire to Northumberland, and a flock of three in Morayshire.

Southwestern Britain had a record 18, four higher than the previous peak and seven higher than the average for 1986-93 (fig. 4). This total was boosted by five which moulted at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, and a flock of six in Cornwall. East and Southeast England had a poor

year, with just 12 (only the seventh best in the period reviewed; fig. 5). Surprisingly, Ireland had none (fig. 6).

TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

Figs. 7-10 show the temporal distribution of Ruddy Shelducks in Britain and Ireland in the four regions during 1986-93. It is immediately apparent that the species is present all year in Britain, with the largest numbers in East and Southeast England (fig. 9). The lowest numbers are present in winter, with all three British regions showing a nadir in February (51 records, averaging six or seven a year). In line with the pattern found by Rogers (1982) – see fig. 1 – the numbers of records pick up in March and April, but, interestingly, the North and the Southwest show a trough in May. There are further arrivals in June, but in all regions, including Ireland, July is the time when Ruddy Shelducks start to appear in numbers. All areas in Britain show a pronounced peak in August: records in that month total 192 individuals, an average of 24 per year, more than three times the February low. Numbers then gradually fall through September, October and November to the mid-winter low.

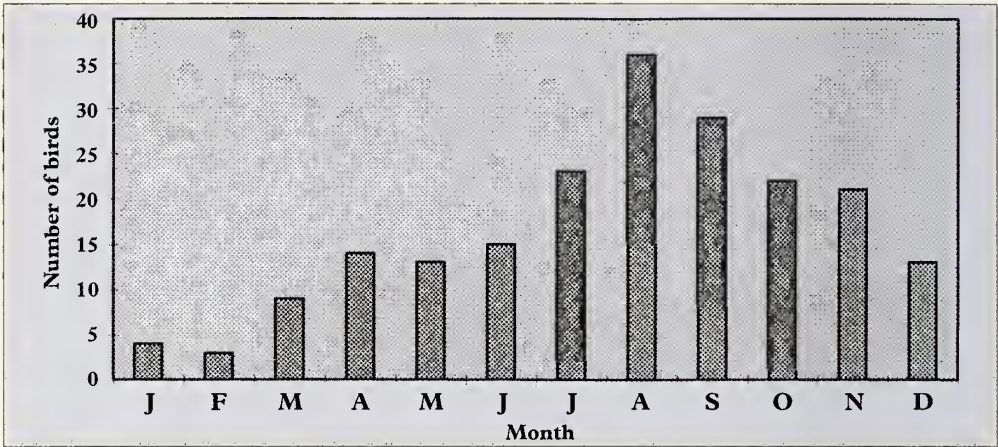


Figure 7. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in northern Britain during 1986-93. Note the July-November peak and the February trough.

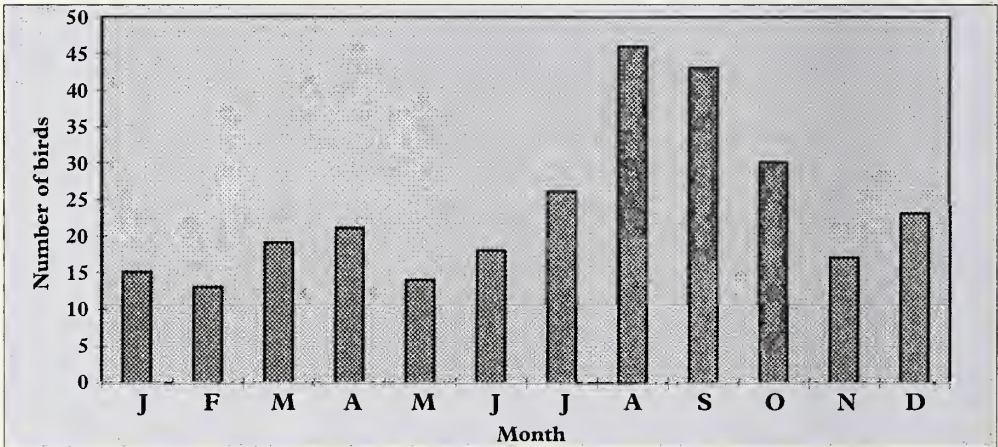


Figure 8. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in southwestern Britain during 1986-93. The pattern is similar to that in northern Britain, with a small March-April peak and a major July-October peak. This area also has more in winter. (Note that a flock of 18 known escapes in Wiltshire in June 1988 has been omitted.)

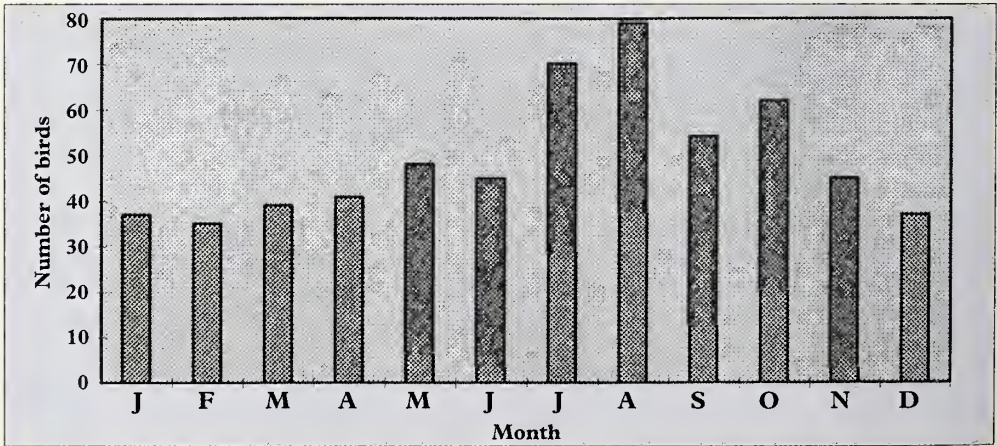


Figure 9. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in east and southeast England during 1986-93. Although this area also shows a July-October peak, there is a larger 'background' resident population of escaped and feral birds, centred mainly on London.

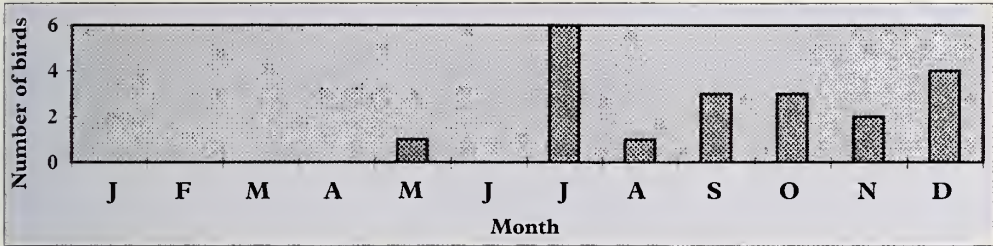


Figure 10. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Ireland during 1986-93. Much rarer in Ireland than in Britain, but note marked peaks in July and September-December.

FLOCKS

A particularly interesting and intriguing feature of the occurrence patterns of the Ruddy Shelduck is that many records involve small flocks. This is unique, because no escaped ducks occur in this way with any regularity, nor usually do vagrant wildfowl.

Twenty flocks of four or more Ruddy Shelducks were recorded during the period. Two of these involved birds which had undoubtedly escaped from nearby wildfowl collections: 18 at Ramsbury, Wiltshire, on 28th June 1988, and seven at Child Beale, Berkshire, on 31st August 1991. It is perhaps surprising, however, that neither flock was seen subsequently. Further details of the remarkable Wiltshire sighting were sought, but the county recorder was unable to shed more light on the record (Rob Turner *in litt.*). It is unclear whether

this large group was actually part of the collection. The other 18 flocks recorded consisted of eight flocks of four, five of five, three of six, one of eight and one of 12. All arrived in late summer or early autumn, with five in July, eight in August, three in September and one in early October (table 1).

Some of the flocks showed interesting movements. Seven at Findhorn Bay, Morayshire, from 13th September 1993, increased to eight on 7th November. They were last recorded there (six) on 16th November, but, on 7th December, seven were seen 460 km (290 miles) to the SSE, at Fairburn Ings, Yorkshire. On 9th December, six, presumably involving the same birds, were seen 350 km (210 miles) to the south, at Christchurch Harbour, Dorset. One could perhaps assume that they subsequently moved south, to the Continent.



64. Six Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, October 1994 (Rob Wilson)

Table 1. The largest flocks (four or more individuals) of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Britain and Ireland during 1986-94.

1986	Holt, Worcestershire, five, 11th September to 18th October.
1988	Ramsbury, Wiltshire, 18, 28th June (from nearby collection). Balmedie, Aberdeenshire, four, 7th August. Pennington, Hampshire, five, 29th August. Blennerville, Co. Kerry, one, at least 20th November, joined by four more in December (date unknown).
1989	Rutland Water and Eyebrook Reservoir, Leicestershire, four, 17th August to 17th September, then three until 23rd October. Filey and Flamborough, Yorkshire, four, 18th August.
1990	Staines Reservoirs, Surrey, five in flight, 5th August.
1991	Various localities, Cumberland/Westmorland/Lancashire/Cheshire, four, 15th August to 11th November. Child Beale, Berkshire, seven, 31st August (from nearby collection).
1992	Otter Estuary, Devon, four, 12th July to 9th August, subsequently up to three at Radipole Lake, Dorset, until 12th November (the three circled Portland on 19th September). Tyttenhanger Gravel Pits, Hertfordshire, four, 26th July. Various localities, North Norfolk, up to six, 12th August to 13th October. Various localities, Essex, up to five, 16th September to 18th October.
1993	Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, six, 3rd-4th July, one until early September. Findhorn Bay, Morayshire, up to eight, 13th September to 16th November; subsequently seven at Fairburn Ings, Yorkshire, on 7th December, and six at Christchurch Harbour, Dorset, on 9th December.
1994	Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, up to five, 20th June to 11th August. Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire, four, 29th July; subsequently in Co. Durham, Yorkshire and Northumberland, 30th July to 31st August. Various localities, Flintshire/Cheshire/Lancashire, up to 12, 24th July to 30th September; up to three until November and one into 1995. Various localities, Cornwall/Isles of Scilly/Devon, up to six, 3rd October to 22nd December.

**BEHAVIOUR, EVIDENCE
OF CAPTIVE ORIGINS AND
AGE STRUCTURES**

Some Ruddy Shelducks are obvious escapes, being tame and occurring in unlikely environments such as town parks, ornamental lakes and even village ponds. On the other hand, many records relate to individuals on large lakes or estuaries and these often behave like wild birds. For example, four at Chew Valley Lake in July 1995 (no doubt involving the same individuals as in 1994) took flight at a range of 200 m, whilst accompanying Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* did not fly. In August 1997, a female at the lake was twice disturbed from a small pool while all the other ducks, waders and gulls *Larus* remained. Similarly, one at the Loch of Forfar, Angus, in June 1994, flew, while accompanying feral geese remained (Martin Scott *in litt.*). It seems that many Ruddy Shelducks behave in this way, and several observers commented on

their relative unapproachability.

Another interesting point is that only three individuals during the period were noted to have been ringed: a colour-ringed pair at Skippool Wyre, Lancashire, in June-July 1989, and one reported with a red colour ring in North Wales and the Wirral in 1994-95 (Judith Smith *in litt.*). Additionally, one at Blennerville, Co. Kerry, on 20th November 1988, had its right wing slightly shorter and more rounded than its left. Remarkably, it was subsequently joined by four more, all timid and unringed (Killian Mullarney *in litt.*). It seems possible that escaped birds may actually draw in wild birds and vice versa, so that there may in any case be some mixing. Even the 12 on the Wirral in 1994 are thought likely to have included one or two escaped birds which had been in the area for several years (Steve Barber *in litt.*). Another example of this occurred at Chew Valley Lake in 1995, when four Ruddy Shelducks were joined by an escaped female Paradise Shelduck

T. variegata which failed to maintain its bond once their moult had been completed. These examples clearly illustrate that the relationships between those birds which are clearly escapes and those more likely to be wild individuals are not always straightforward.

Another feature of the occurrence patterns is that remarkably few records related to juveniles. The only ones which specifically did so involved two at Wilstone Reservoir, Hertfordshire, during 9th-11th September 1990, and two at Frensham Great and Little Ponds, Surrey, from 9th August to 8th November 1992 (which almost certainly

emanated from Chertsey Weir, where a pair raised two young). At least three of the flock of six in Cornwall in 1994 were aged as 'immatures' by Ogilvie & Young (1998). Juvenile Ruddy Shelducks are not so obvious as are, for example, juvenile Common Shelducks *T. tadorna*, and it seems likely that most are not aged by field observers. Many of the summer records, however, are probably too early to involve juveniles. First-winter plumage, acquired after a late-summer/early-autumn post-juvenile body moult, resembles the adult's eclipse plumage, so older 'immatures' are even more difficult to distinguish.



65. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Top Hill Low Reservoir, Yorkshire, March 1995 (Tony G. Collinson). The clear-cut white face patch indicates that this bird is a female, but note the suggestion of a neck ring. Another photograph of the same bird failed to show this feature, which is presumably an illusion created by ruffled feathers.



66. Adult male Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Bayfield Lake, Norfolk, May 1997 (Iain Leach). With its rather plain, bulbous head and prominent black neck ring, this striking individual was clearly an adult male. It was one of an escaped or feral pair which subsequently bred, although none of the young survived.

ESCAPES

The Ruddy Shelduck is common in captivity. A census of wildfowl-breeders in Britain in the autumn of 1993 revealed that 46 breeders kept a total of 159 Ruddy Shelducks. This total comprised 78 males and 81 females, 40 of which laid eggs. Corresponding figures for 1990 were similar: 45 keepers held 169 individuals (82 males, 87 females, of which 30 laid eggs). It must be stressed that these figures represent a minimum for the British captive stock as only *known breeders* were contacted (Barrie Hughes *in litt.* and verbally; information from privately published *A Wildfowl Census Report for 1991 and 1994*). In the Netherlands, a survey in 1991 found 194 adults and 444 young (van der Laar *et al.* 1994). About one-third of the members of the Dutch Pheasants and Waterfowl Association – 'Aviornis International Nederland' – responded, so it is unclear whether the remaining keepers have significant numbers of Ruddy Shelducks. Nearly all these birds are 'wing-clipped' and, from 1995, Dutch legislation requires that all are ringed.

It is clear, from the information received from county recorders and other correspondents, that many of the Ruddy Shelducks recorded in Britain are escapes from captivity. From figs. 7-10, it can be seen that the regions with the largest resident populations are the East and Southeast, followed by the Southwest and, finally, the North and Ireland. In an average year, there may be about five to ten present during the lowest period, in February. The London area produces most records and these are based on various park lakes, gravel-pits and reservoirs. It seems likely that many originate from birds which have been released onto park lakes in the area or which have escaped from local zoos or wildfowl collections. For example, Dave Odell (*in litt.*) stated that, in his opinion, records in Bedfordshire related to escaped birds wandering the county, sometimes in association with Greylag *Anser anser* and Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*. He

thought that some may have originated from Whipsnade Zoo. David Gibson submitted a bizarre photograph to the British Trust for Ornithology of a pair of Ruddy Shelducks perched on chimney pots in Islington, London, at the end of January 1996 (John Marchant *in litt.*).

Rogers (1982) stated that the species is known to have bred in the Humberside area 'since 1975', and that a pair bred at the University of York in 1974, rearing five young. Occasional breeding by escaped birds still takes place. In 1988, a pair raised two young at Highbury New Park, London; in the same year, another pair produced six ducklings at Stoke Newington Reservoir, London. Three years later, a pair raised at least three young at Queen Mary Reservoir, London. In 1992, a pair raised four young at Chertsey Weir, Surrey. In May 1997, a pair hatched 11 young at Bayfield Lake, Norfolk, but none fledged.

Escaped birds are not confined to the Home Counties, and several reports from around Britain refer to tame birds or to known or 'obvious' escapes. In addition, several apparent Ruddy Shelducks turned out to be Cape Shelducks *T. cana*, while in other cases there was genuine confusion over the birds' identity. Ruddy Shelducks are, one assumes, long-lived birds and it is clear that escaped and even feral-bred individuals may stay in the wild for many years, so clouding any occurrence patterns of genuine vagrants. It also seems likely that some escaped and feral birds may undertake annual and seasonal movements which are 'pre-programmed', so that their occurrence patterns may mirror those of wild birds. It is even conceivable that some escaped birds may move south to the Continent in winter and return again to Britain in the summer. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the 'obvious escapes' or feral birds in the London area remained at their respective sites all year and did not vacate them or move onto larger waters, either to moult or to spend the winter.

THE 1994 FLOCKS IN BRITAIN

In the North, the first arrivals were noted at the Loch of Forfar, Angus, on 8th June, and at Neumann's Flash, Cheshire, on 26th June. Both records were unexceptional, but the first evidence of an invasion was the appearance of a flock of eight at the Point of Air, Flintshire, on 24th-25th July, immediately after the full moon. These then moved to the Wirral and formed the nucleus of a congregation which reached a peak of 12 on 7th September (ten at Ince Bank and two at Frodsham Score, Cheshire). Up to seven remained in this area until 30th September, then up to three until 1st November, two until 6th November and one (bearing a red colour-ring) into 1995. In late autumn, it seems that some of the Wirral birds

dispersed westwards into northwest Wales, providing records of singles at Foryd Bay, Caernarfonshire, during 13th-16th November, at Broad Water, Merionethshire, from 21st November to 14th December, and near Holyhead, Anglesey, during 19th-31st December; another was seen near Glan Conwy, Denbighshire, during 17th-31st December (fig. 11).

Other flocks included three flying southeast over Swanton Marshes, Norfolk, on 5th June; subsequently, two were seen at Cley, Norfolk, on 27th-28th June. Four were seen at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire, on 29th July, and it seems likely that these moved some 130 km (80 miles) northwest to Crookfoot Reservoir, Co. Durham, on 30th July, then on to Shibdon Pond, Gateshead, Co. Durham, on 31st July, and to Lovell Hill

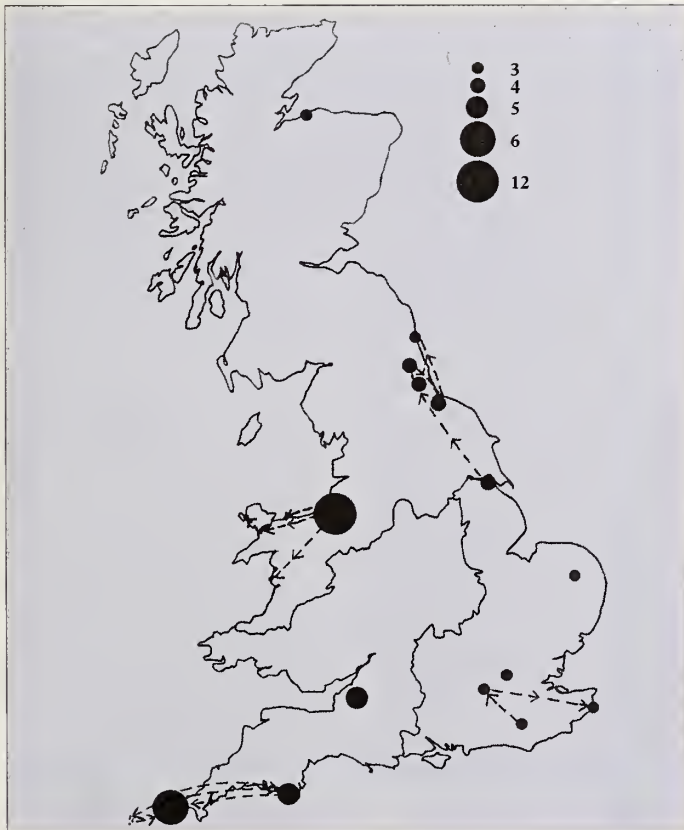


Figure 11. Flocks of three or more Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* recorded in Britain in 1994. Note that some of the flocks moved around and that some from the flock of 12 on the Wirral, Cheshire/Lancashire, dispersed into North Wales. An unconfirmed report of a flock of nine (at Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, on 9th September) has not been included. The map also shows the three main regions of Britain referred to in the text (see page 227).



67. Adult Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, July 1997 (Keith Vinicombe). The more distant bird, with its white facial patch, is a female, while the closer bird, with its rather plain bulbous head and larger size, is a male. Note that males lose their black neck rings in eclipse plumage. These two were part of a group of up to five Ruddy Shelducks which moulted at Chew annually from 1987 to at least 1998.

Pools, Wilton, Yorkshire, during 2nd-6th August. Up to three, perhaps involving the same birds, were then seen at Druridge Bay, Northumberland, from 28th August to 16th October. In Scotland, a Ruddy Shelduck appeared at Findhorn Bay, Morayshire, on 16th April. On 1st July, two were seen there, joined by a third on 2nd. Two were last seen there on 4th December. This site has a long tradition of attracting Ruddy Shelducks (pages 240 and 252).

Another flock appeared in Somerset, at Chew Valley Lake. A single male turned up at Chew every summer from 1987 to 1993, undergoing a complete wing moult in at least five of those seven years. In August 1993, he was joined by a second bird. In 1994, two appeared on 20th June, joined by a third on 22nd June, rising to five during 16th-23rd July, with two until 11th August. All underwent a complete wing moult. It is interesting that they arrived and left in 'dribs and drabs' and that, whatever their origins, these record numbers coincided with the invasion. Four reappeared in 1995, two in 1996 and four in 1997 and 1998.

A flock of six arrived in west Cornwall on 3rd October. They were first seen at Drift Reservoir before moving to the Hayle Estuary later the same day, where they remained until 28th October. On 29th-30th October, they flew some 40 km (25 miles) west to the Isles of Scilly, but then returned to Cornwall, where they

remained on the Hayle Estuary until 12th December, with one until 20th; they visited other areas in west Cornwall, and even the Tamar Estuary (120 km or 75 miles to the northeast), between times. They were last seen during 19th-22nd December, when three of them took up residence at the Plym Estuary, Devon. It has been suggested that these birds had flown 420 km (260 miles) southwest from the Wirral, but, since there is no evidence that the Wirral flock contained any 'immatures', they are perhaps better treated as separate.

The only other flocks perhaps involved one mobile group: three at Arlington Reservoir, Sussex, on 30th August; three at Staines Reservoirs, Surrey, on 18th September; and three at St Margaret's Bay, Kent, on 23rd September. In addition, up to three escaped or feral birds were seen throughout the year in northeast London, based on Stoke Newington, Wood Green, Walthamstow and Queen Mary Reservoirs. Records from this area date back to 1988.

A report of nine written in the log book at Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, on 7th September, could not be substantiated and has not been included in the totals.

The total number of Ruddy Shelducks recorded in Britain in 1994 was about 55, including obvious escapes. Surprisingly, none was recorded in Ireland. The monthly totals for 1994 are shown in figs. 12-14.

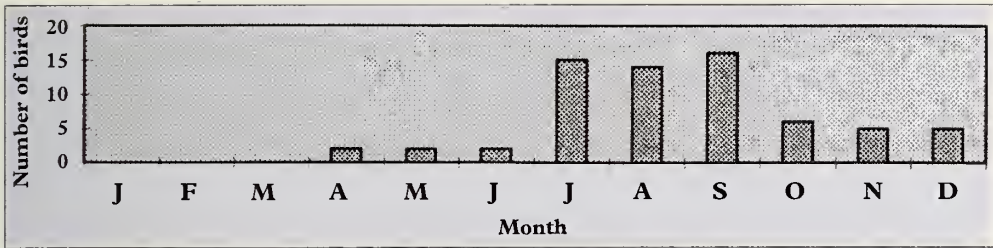


Figure 12. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in northern Britain in 1994. Note the July-September peak created mainly by a flock of up to 12 in North Wales and the Wirral, Cheshire/Lancashire.

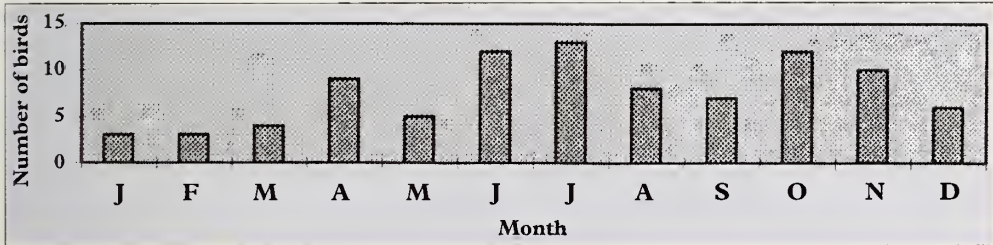


Figure 13. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in southwestern Britain in 1994. A June-July influx was followed by another in October.

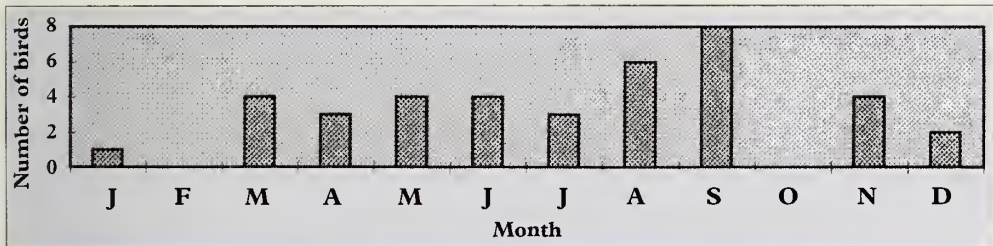


Figure 14. Estimated monthly totals of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in east and southeast England in 1994. Note that numbers were low, with no July influx, but increased slightly in August-September.

THE 1994 INVASION IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE

As well as the 55 in Britain, there was a total of about 351 Ruddy Shelducks elsewhere in Europe outside the species' normal range (262 in Fenno-Scandia), as follows:

AUSTRIA At least four observations from the Bodensee (Lake Constance), thought to have involved feral birds. Two in the Lake Neusiedl area were thought to have been escapes (Hans-Martin Berg *in litt.*).

BELARUS One record in 1994 correlated with the escape of four from Minsk Zoo several days previously (Mikhail E. Nikiforov *in litt.*).

BELGIUM There was no influx in 1994, but a flock of eight was seen flying southwest over the sea at Oostende on

11th August (Jan Pollet *in litt.*).

CZECH REPUBLIC No evidence of a significant influx, with just three records in 1994 (Karel Hudec *in litt.*).

DENMARK A feral pair reared one duckling in Himmerland, North Jutland. At least 100 were seen in the invasion. An increasing number was recorded in Jutland from the beginning of July: on 1st there was a flock of five at Vaernengene, West Jutland, and presumably the same birds at Langli, South Jutland, during 3rd-11th. A flock of eight passed Trolldholmene, North Jutland, on 2nd and Blåvand, West Jutland, on 3rd (table 2). In eastern Denmark, a flock of six passed Møns Fyr, Møn, on 26th August (not 26th June as stated in DOFT 90: 58), and what

was perhaps the same flock of six stayed at Bøtø Nor, Lolland-Falster, during 28th-30th August. In September, the flocks were more scattered, and the last were seen on 12th November, possibly the feral family (Christensen *et al.* 1996; Rolf Christensen and Brian Rasmussen *in litt.*).

FINLAND After the first two reports from southwest Finland on 21st-22nd May (possibly one individual) and one on 12th-16th June, the main influx began on 8th July. Most arrived during 13th-22nd July, immediately prior to the full moon, when there were 38 new arrivals, and the invasion continued until at least 20th August (fig. 15). It is considered to have involved about 78 individuals, although there was probably some duplication. There were two flocks of six, two of seven, one of eight, and the largest a flock of 11 near Kuopio, East Central Finland, on 15th July (table 2). The influx was first noted in central parts and subsequently in the south (Hannu Jännes *in litt.*).

FRANCE Eight to 12 recorded up to 25th October, which is a normal total (Dr P. J. Dubois *in litt.*).

GERMANY About 13 between 16th July

and 6th November, including groups of five (Peter H. Barthel *in litt.*).

HUNGARY Small influx, with at least six records between March and September, including eight at one site in mid July. Two ringed birds were considered to have been escapes (Dr Gabor Magyar and György Szimuly *in litt.*).

LATVIA One on 10th July which was 'rather wild' (Jānis Baumanis *in litt.*).

LITHUANIA Four in Kuronian Bay during 19th-27th July was the first record for the country (Dr P. Kurlavicius *in litt.*).

THE NETHERLANDS One flock of 20 on 18th July at Steile Bank, Gaasterlan-Sleat, Friesland, but such a record is not exceptional (Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

NORWAY There were 13 records, involving about 34 individuals (*Vår Fuglefauna* 18: 269; suppl. 2: 10). There was a flock of six at Årnestangen, Rælingen, county Akershus, on 23rd-28th July, and a flock of seven at Kurefjorden, Råde, county Østfold, on 24th July (table 2). Subsequent smaller parties were recorded until 1st September, with one during 24th-31st December (Andrew W. Clarke and Runar Jåbekk *in litt.*).

POLAND At least seven, spread throughout the country, between the beginning of July and the end of September; a fairly typical number (Tadeusz Stawarczyk *in litt.*).

SLOVAKIA A male in May which was considered to have been wild (Dr Alfréd Trnka *in litt.*).

SWEDEN The invasion involved a sudden arrival in mid July. It began on 13th July (table 2) and maximum numbers were reached on 29th July. They decreased quickly during August, held steady until 20th, then declined rapidly, with the last on 1st September (fig. 16). It was difficult to judge how many were recorded. The 29th July maximum was 29, although the total numbers were probably at least double that figure (Tommy Tyrberg *in litt.*). One estimate for the 1994 invasion was 'at least

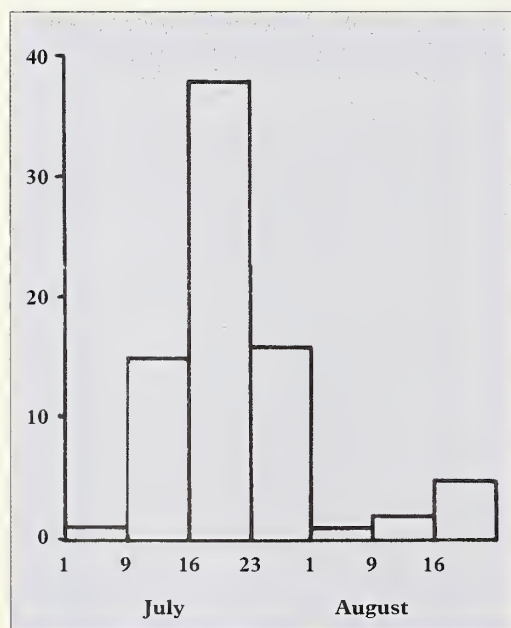


Figure 15. Arrival dates of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Finland during July-August 1994.

50' (*Vår Fågelvärld* suppl. 22: 80-81). A smaller influx took place in 1995 and

involved a daily maximum of 14; it was slightly later than in 1994.

Table 2. Flocks of six or more Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in 1994. The first large flock was recorded in Denmark on 2nd July. Peak numbers in Finland, Norway and Sweden were in the second half of July. It is likely that some flocks were recorded in more than one country.

DENMARK	July	2nd 3rd	8 past Trolldholmene, N-Jutland 8 past Blåvand, Ribe	} same flock
	August	26th 28th-30th	6 past Møns Fyr, Møn 6 at Bøtø Nor, Lolland-Falster	
FINLAND	July	15th	11 near Kuopio, East Central	} perhaps same flock
		16th-17th	7 near Oulo, Northwest Coast	
		17th-31st	up to 7, in Southwest	
		20th	6 at Närpiö, West Coast	
		20th-25th	8 in Hanko, Southwest	
NORWAY	July	23rd-28th	6 in Akershus	
		24th	7 in Østfold	
SWEDEN	July	13th	6 in Uppland	
		15th	7 at Gårdby, Öland	
		21st-30th	10 at Mellby Ör, Öland	
		27th	6 in Ångermanland	

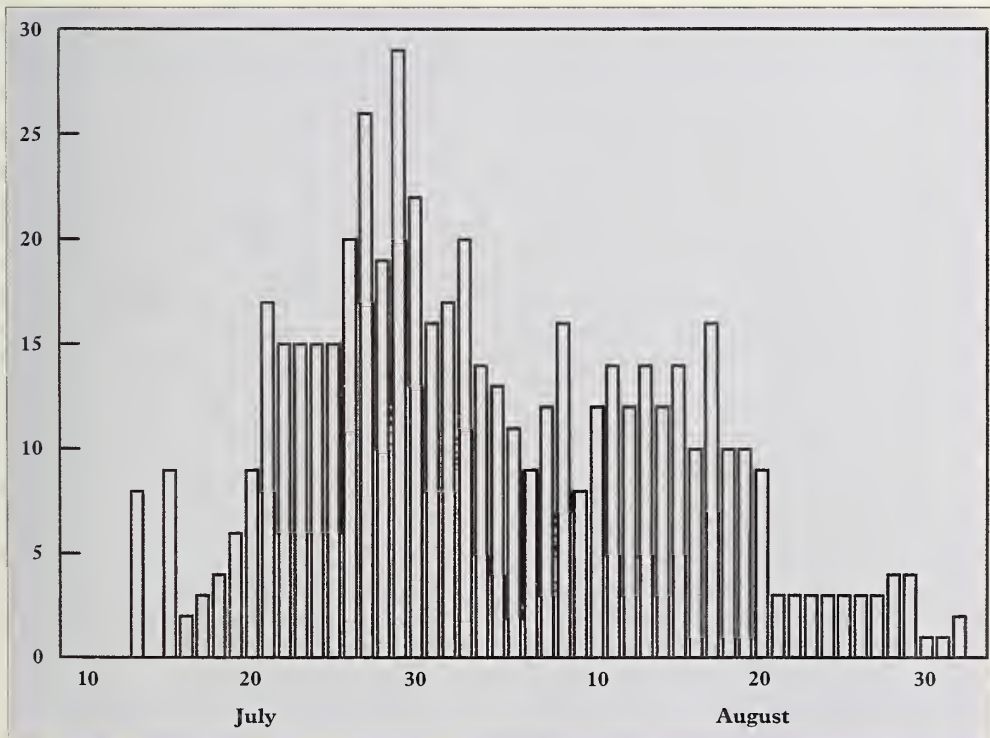


Figure 16. Daily numbers of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* observed in Sweden during July-August 1994.

PREVIOUS INFLUXES
AND INVASIONS

Rogers (1982) noted that the problem of escapes was recognised as long ago as 1889, stating that the species had been introduced onto ornamental waters during the nineteenth century. Ogilvie (1892) similarly mentioned that many naturalists at that time challenged the position of the Ruddy Shelduck on the British List because of the escape problem. Despite this, there were several influxes recorded during the nineteenth century. On 8th September 1884, a party of four was seen in Kent. In 1886, a small influx took place involving parties of up to six in several parts of Britain and Ireland.

In 1892, the largest and most famous invasion occurred, involving a probable minimum of 59 individuals, with the largest flock being of about 20 in Ireland.

In that year, there were four records, involving at least two individuals, in Norway between 2nd August and 12th October (Runar Jåbekk *in litt.*), and there were three records in Sweden in 1892-93 (Tommy Tyrberg *in litt.*). Remarkably, there were also seven in Iceland and two or three in western Greenland. Ogilvie came to the conclusion that these were undoubtedly wild birds which had been driven away from their Russian breeding grounds. Table 3 lists the 1892 records for Britain and Ireland. Like the 1994 invasion, that in 1892 was also in late summer (from 20th June to 26th September), it involved small flocks and there was a strong northerly pattern of occurrence; note that even the Irish birds originally turned up in the north of the country. Of interest, the five at the mouth of the River Findhorn, Morayshire, on 6th July were matched by

Table 3. Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* recorded in Britain and Ireland during the 1892 invasion (from Ogilvie 1892). A minimum total of 59 was recorded: Scotland (29), Ireland (20) and England (10). Most observers were agreed on the birds' wildness.

SCOTLAND	
20th June	Five, Durness, Sutherland (one shot). Subsequently, three separate flocks, of 14, ten and four (the last of these being the remainder of the original flock). They disappeared at the beginning of July.
6th July	Five, mouth of River Findhorn, Morayshire (one shot); four remained until the end of July.
IRELAND	
24th June	A flock of 'about 20' seen near Adara, Co. Donegal (one shot); three remained for ten days.
26th June	A wounded bird at the Skerries, Co. Dublin; a flock of seven in the same area at about the same time (two shot). 'Many more' reported in the same area at the same time.
7th July	One shot near Drogheda, mouth of River Boyne, Co. Louth.
7th July	Six between Limerick and Foynes, Co. Limerick (one shot).
4th August	Three at Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal.
18th August	Six near Inch, Co. Donegal (one shot); another shot there on 19th September.
N.B. It is assumed that all the Irish records stemmed from the original flock of about 20.	
ENGLAND	
5th July	Eight came in off the sea at Thorpe Mere, Suffolk (three shot, but only one killed). The two injured birds remained to 3rd and 4th August, respectively, when both were shot and killed.
17th July	Two at River Wampool, Cumberland (one shot).
1st September	One shot, Humberstone Fitties, Lincolnshire.
13th September	One found dead, Snettisham Beach, Norfolk.
26th September	One shot at Crofton Hall, near Wigton, Cumberland.

up to eight in the same place a century later, in September-November 1993: a remarkable case of history repeating itself. The Greenland records are interesting as, if one assumes an origin in southeast Europe or southwestern Asia, the orientation of the 1994 invasion, if projected beyond Scandinavia, continues through Iceland and Greenland. It is clear, therefore, that the 1892 and 1994 invasions were very similar.

The last influx considered to have related to wild birds involved three records (five to seven individuals) in Ireland in the winter of 1945/46, these occurring at the same time as an influx of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus*.

CAUSES OF THE INVASIONS

If one assumes that the 1994 invasion of northern Europe involved wild birds, then what could have caused it, and from where did it originate?

It is traditionally thought that the closest breeding populations to Britain are in Algeria and Morocco, but, if one looks at a globe, it is obvious that the westernmost breeders from the southeast European/southwest Asian population are at a similar distance. Also, as the northwest African population is relatively small (currently about 2,500 birds), the much larger Asian population seems a considerably more likely origin. This is backed up by a Polish ringing recovery from Kirghizstan (a distance of about 4,000 km (2,500 miles); see page 247). Another 1,200 km (800 miles) would have taken the bird as far as Britain.

What would prompt large numbers of Ruddy Shelducks to leave this area? The species' Asian breeding range corresponds with the steppe and semi-desert zone, including the high plateau steppe of Tibet and southern China. D. Cullum at the Meteorological Office kindly provided rainfall data from Turkey and the southern republics of the former Soviet Union. Some of this information suggested that the summers

in the early 1990s in this region were slightly hotter and drier than normal, but it should be stressed that there are problems in obtaining rainfall data from this area. Information has always been sparse and of doubtful reliability and, in the past few years, the reception of data has deteriorated further owing to economic recession and the increase in regional unrest and conflict.

Mike Wilson (*in litt.* quoting Dr V. P. Belik) reported that a very severe drought in Ukraine in 1994 resulted in almost all the waterbodies there drying up. Indeed, an artificial Ruddy Shelduck population based on Askaniya Nova Reserve held only 100 birds in the autumn of 1994, instead of the usual 300 pairs.

MOULT MIGRATIONS

Unlike most birds, waterfowl usually have three, not two, basic migrations each year. Because they become flightless during their late-summer wing moult, they undertake summer moult migrations to traditional safe areas which have a reliable food supply. A well-known example of this is provided by the Common Shelduck. In northwestern Europe, this species migrates to the German Waddensee area, where up to 100,000 gather. The birds are drawn in from a huge area which includes Ireland, Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Scandinavia, northern Germany, northern Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. They flock prior to migration, which is probably undertaken in one overland flight. The first ones move in June, probably involving immatures from previous years, the adults following in July, with some movement as late as September, especially from the east (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

It seems likely that the Ruddy Shelduck's moult follows a similar pattern. Cramp & Simmons (1977) stated that it is flightless for about four weeks during the period from mid July to September, and it moults usually on large



68. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Sheepwash Country Park, West Midlands, September 1994 (Keith Stone). Ageing of Ruddy Shelducks at this time of year does not appear to be easy. Juveniles start a body moult from July onwards and are in first-winter plumage before December. Thus, wild juveniles are more likely to be rare in Britain and Ireland. First-winter plumage appears to be similar to that of adults in eclipse.

areas of water near the breeding grounds (Scott & Rose 1996; Snow & Perrins 1998). In recent years, the moulting grounds have shifted from Kazakhstan west to Lake Manych-Gudilo, east of Rostov (between the Black and Caspian Seas), where thousands congregate (Mike Wilson *in litt.*, quoting Viktor Belik).

Those moulting at Chew Valley Lake are flightless for about three weeks during the period mid July to mid August, but body moult has been noted as early as 14th June. June is the time when the first moult-migrants normally appear there, and it seems likely that, as with the Common Shelduck, previous years' immatures, non-breeders and failed breeders are the first to move.

The June-July incursions of Ruddy Shelducks into northwestern Europe correlate with the timing of their moult migrations, and it seems possible that they could be provoked by problems on their moulting grounds, such as desiccation, rather than by more-widespread ecological problems. If this is the case, then it seems feasible that adverse conditions in relatively localised areas could produce such movements.

THE GLOSSY IBIS LINK

A species which has traditionally been associated with the Ruddy Shelduck in northern Europe is the Glossy Ibis. A contemporaneous influx of this species into Ireland in the winter of 1945/46 was the main reason that Irish ornithologists regarded the Ruddy Shelducks seen there that winter as being of wild origin.

Fig. 17 shows the temporal distribution of the species in Britain and Ireland during 1958-95. Like the Ruddy Shelduck, it may occur as early as March (one was at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, as early as 7th March 1981), but it differs from the Ruddy Shelduck in that it has a larger May peak and, in autumn, it occurs appreciably later, with a peak in October. This autumn peak coincides with the Polish recovery of a Ruddy Shelduck from Kirghizstan.

In the Western Palearctic, the Glossy Ibis breeds mainly in southeast Europe and southwestern Asia. Despite the fact that the two species are unrelated, it seems likely that both may fall victim to wetland desiccation and periodically erupt into western Europe. Although the timings of their incursions differ, both

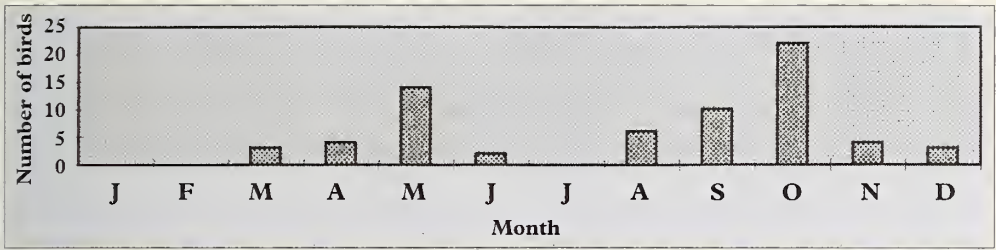


Figure 17. Monthly totals of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* in Britain and Ireland during 1958-95. In contrast to the Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, there is a strong May peak and a late-autumn rather than a late-summer peak.

species have a tendency to occur in small flocks, and a 'good year' for Ruddy Shelducks is often a 'good year' for Glossy Ibises. Some may move large distances: in a marked northward eruption in the autumn of 1926, one juvenile ibis travelled 2,600 km (1,600 miles) from Hungary to Kuybyshev, Russia, in just 23 days (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

It is surely significant that, in 1994, abnormally high numbers of Glossy Ibises were reported in northwestern Europe, but the occurrences were, as is typical, rather later in the autumn than those of the Ruddy Shelducks. There was a record influx into Denmark, with at least nine between 3rd September and 30th October, and there were three records (four birds) in Germany during 19th-26th September, one in Britain (Scilly & Cornwall) during 23rd-27th September, two in Sweden during 8th-10th October and one in Poland on 16th-17th October. There was also a record influx into the Netherlands, with 15 records involving a maximum total of 37 birds, including groups of seven, eight and ten, most of which were first-winters (Smulders & Slingerland 1996); one subsequently overwintered at Harlem, Noord-Holland (*Brit. Birds* 88: 265).

Smulders & Slingerland (1996) listed 22 records of groups of more than four Glossy Ibises in northwest Europe during 1900-96. The largest flocks were of about 30 in Belgium in October 1903, about 20 in Orkney in September 1907, 30 in northern France in September 1909, 20 in northern France in October 1923, about 25 in Belgium in October-November 1932, 20 in

Co. Wexford, Ireland, in October 1934, a remarkable 39 at Liminka, Finland, in October 1995, and 20 in the Netherlands in October 1996. The pattern of occurrences mirrors that of the Ruddy Shelduck in that there are a lot of old records (up to 1936) and a recent resurgence (1986-96).

OCCURRENCES OF OTHER SOUTHERN SPECIES

One of the prejudices facing the Ruddy Shelduck is the fact that it tends to occur at a time of year – late summer – that is poor for vagrancy, but it is worth making the point that other unrelated southern migrants show a similar occurrence pattern. Numbers of both Cory's *Calonectris diomedea* and Balearic Shearwaters *Puffinus mauretanicus* reach peaks in Britain and Ireland in July and August. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* both also show a similar pattern, with major arrivals in July-August, a peak in August or September, and smaller numbers remaining to overwinter before moving back south in late winter or spring (Combridge & Parr 1992; Dennis 1995; Walker 1995). The principle of southern species moving north to take advantage of short-lived summer food supplies is not, therefore, without precedent.

Another species which may move north in summer is the Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*. This species is relevant since it, too, originates in southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe and it, too, is irruptive. Its pattern of occurrences is

very similar to that of the Ruddy Shelduck, with a peak in June-August involving adults, smaller peaks in September-October (mainly reverse-migrating juveniles) and residual numbers remaining to overwinter (Dymond *et al.* 1989). It is interesting to note that this species has also been tarnished with the escape stigma. Indeed, until 1965 some records were included in square brackets in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain' published in this journal.

BREEDING POPULATIONS

The Ruddy Shelduck has a wide distribution from southeastern Europe across central and southern Asia. Unlike the Common Shelduck, it is not a bird of maritime coastal habitats, occupying instead a wide spectrum of inland biotopes, primarily shallow, sparsely vegetated brackish marshes and lakes in semi-arid regions. Most Asian populations, except in the extreme southwest, are largely migratory, moving south to winter at lower latitudes and altitudes. In the Caspian region, they return to the breeding grounds from early March to early April, and autumn migration takes place until November.

The Black Sea/East Mediterranean winter population is estimated at 20,000 birds, which is consistent with a European breeding population of about 6,000 pairs. There is some evidence from mid-winter counts of a decline since the 1980s, but this has still to be confirmed as there are very large year-to-year fluctuations. The separation of this population from the one in southwest Asia, estimated at 35,000 birds, is poorly defined (Scott & Rose 1996).

Population trends have been largely unknown, but Madge & Burn (1988) noted a decline in eastern Europe, including the European part of the former USSR. Snow & Perrins (1998) stated that, following a major long-term decline, the recent trend varies. Although the species has declined

in Greece, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and Turkey (although there are still about 4,000-8,000 breeding pairs in the last country), it has increased in Bulgaria and, particularly, in Russia (Hallman *et al.* 1997).

The Ruddy Shelduck is an erratic breeder in Greece, with up to 15-40 pairs. In Romania, there were perhaps five to ten pairs during 1986-92, following a decrease, but, in Bulgaria, the species has increased to 50-150 pairs in recent years. In Moldova, the population of three to eight pairs in 1988 is considered to be stable (Snow & Perrins 1998). In Ukraine, it was widely distributed in the south and southeast in the nineteenth century, but it decreased appreciably in the first half of the twentieth century and 125-180 pairs were estimated in the whole country in 1991; it is now common only in the eastern Crimea. In 1989, however, an artificial population developed (up to 300 pairs) based on the Askaniya Nova Zoo, escapes from which replenish the wild population. The hunting of Ruddy Shelducks has been banned in Ukraine since 1977 (Igor Gorban *in litt.*). In Russia, a westward range expansion was noted as early as the 1970s and this has extended and increased during the following 20 years. The area colonised extends from northwestern Kazakhstan, and from Russia north of the Caspian, to the middle and lower Don, and from the Caspian west to the northern Caucasus, where there are currently 3,000-4,000 pairs. This estimate does not include Dagestan (on the west side of the Caspian Sea), which appears to hold the greatest concentration of the species. There is also a minimum of 1,000-1,500 pairs in the Volgograd region, and this duck is not uncommon in Astrakhan and Saratov. The increase has been linked to greater protection and to the cessation of large-scale shooting. There are probably more than 300 pairs in Azerbaijan, while farther east, in the Caspian region and in Kazakhstan, there has been an increase in the number present at the end of the

breeding season between 1972 and 1989 (Snow & Perrins 1998).

A five-fold to six-fold increase in the Iranian wintering population in the 15-20 years prior to the 1987-91 Asian Wildfowl Census presumably reflects a growth in the southwest Asian breeding population. Interestingly, a map of sites of international importance shown by Scott & Rose (1996) included ten in Iran, but none was listed for Iraq, although two such sites were identified there in the 1970s. It has been suggested that the much-publicised drainage of the Tigris/Euphrates marshes may have produced the 1994 invasion of northern Europe but, in view of the paucity of major sites in Iraq, this seems unlikely.

Rogers (1982) stated that the North African population had declined and that the species no longer moves north in any significant numbers to winter in Iberia. Madge & Burn (1988) noted a North African population of some 1,000 pairs in 1970, with some 50 pairs in Morocco and most of the rest in western Algeria. Rae Vernon (*in litt.*) has, however, reported that the figure of 50 pairs quoted by Madge & Burn (and repeated by Snow & Perrins 1998) was too low and that it undoubtedly stemmed from a typing error for 500 pairs. Recent winter counts (up to 1992) suggest a current population of up to 2,000 birds, and there were as many as 500 at the Barrage El Massira, Oued Oum-Er-Rbia, during the summer of 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 446), and 660 on the ephemeral Lake Merzouga in April 1996 and 400 in April 1997. July-September concentrations in the Moulouya Delta presumably comprise moulting birds (Scott & Rose 1996). The breeding population is difficult to census, but it is currently thought to be reasonably stable, with no evidence of decline. In Algeria, the Ruddy Shelduck is common in the mid-Saharan chotts and sebkhas in the south, where it is possibly a resident breeding bird; 200 were counted there in the winter of 1994. A pair bred in central Tunisia in 1995, with two more

subsequently, the first breeding records in Tunisia since the late 1950s or early 1960s (Scott & Rose 1996). In addition, the species bred on Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands in 1994 and 1996 (Snow & Perrins 1998). Scott & Rose (1996) suggested a population of 2,500 individuals for the whole of northwest Africa.

There is also a breeding population (200-500 birds or 100-200 pairs) in the highlands of Ethiopia, virtually restricted to the Bale Mountains National Park. It was discovered there as recently as 1967 (Scott & Rose 1996).

CONTINENTAL OCCURRENCE PATTERNS (EXCLUDING 1994)

In order to evaluate the status of Ruddy Shelduck in Britain and Ireland, it is essential to compare the records here with those on the Continent. All western and northern European rarities committees were contacted by e-mail by Professor David Parkin or by post by the authors, as were a number of individual birders.

NORTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE

AUSTRIA There are old records which are considered to relate to wild birds, but recent ones are considered to relate to escapes or feral birds from other European countries. The species is, therefore, in the Austrian Category B. More recent records (1980-95) are concentrated in two areas: (1) Rheindelta/Lake Constance (also known as the Bodensee) and (2) Seewinkel east of Lake Neusiedl in the very east of Austria. In the first area, the species occurs almost annually, with flocks of up to ten, mainly in spring and autumn. These are not considered to be wild (perhaps from Germany, but see the details for Switzerland on page 248). In the second area, it has occurred from March to September, mainly single birds, with small peaks in April and from July to September. There are a few records from elsewhere in Austria. Although all are considered to be escapes, one in March

1994 arrived with a flock of White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons*, which also included a few Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis*, so that an origin in southeastern Europe seems possible. By contrast, one in July 1994 associated with an Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (Dr Andreas Ranner *in litt.*).

BELARUS There are two records, in 1954 and 1994 (Dr Mikhail E. Nikiforov *in litt.*).

BELGIUM The species was already common in captivity at the time of the first Belgian record in 1880, and all recent records are considered to be of captive origin. There have been more than 350 records, mostly in April-May and August to mid November, particularly in the third week of October (Jan Pollet *in litt.*). For breeding details, see page 249.

CZECH REPUBLIC There was an old record in southern Bohemia in 1870, one in 1952 and many more since 1960, particularly from the 1970s onwards. Between 1981 and 1994, there were 19 records involving 33 individuals, with peaks in May and August-September. Most are thought to have been escapes (Karel Hudec *in litt.*). For breeding records, see page 250.

DENMARK The species is in the Danish Category B by virtue of the summer invasions of 1892-93. The largest flock seen at this time was of ten on 26th June 1893 in Zealand. In June-August 1990, 20 were seen, including flocks of three in Jutland and Bornholm. There were five observations in 1992 and 15 in 1993, including a flock of five on 24th October in Jutland (Ivan Olsen *in litt.*).

ESTONIA There are just five records: in the summer of 1869, July 1977, September 1984, May 1989 and April-May 1995. The middle three were considered to have been escapes, but the last bird gave no indications of a captive origin (P. Horak and Dr Vilju Lilleleht *in litt.*).

FINLAND None was recorded in the 1892 invasion year, but there were 40 between 1887 and 1974 and 24 between 1974 and 1993. There were two small influxes in

1970 (five records, 11 individuals) and in 1990 (five records, seven individuals, from mid July to mid August; Hannu Jännes *in litt.*).

FRANCE The species is in Category B on the strength of genuinely wild birds in the nineteenth century; one captured near Strasbourg in 1668 is also considered to have been wild. It is also in Category D because of many twentieth-century records which are considered to be of doubtful origin. The species was scarce and not annual in the 1960s and early 1970s, but it increased markedly from 1976 onwards. This is considered to have been due to better observer coverage. During 1981-94, there were 103 records (144 birds), with an annual average of ten. The best years were 1989 (20 birds) and 1993 (17 birds). Most occurrences were across the north and northeast of the country and others along the west coast. There are also some records from the Mediterranean, but there is no evidence to suggest that these birds originated in North Africa. The highest concentrations of individuals between 1959 and 1991 were 22 in Pas-de-Calais and 17 in both Bas-Rhin and Bouches-du-Rhône. Some of the records relate to small flocks. As in Britain, there are fewest in February, a small peak in April and larger numbers from July to December, with peaks in September and, in particular, November. The peak is thus somewhat later than in Britain and Ireland (Dr Philippe Dubois *in litt.* and from Dubois & Yésou (1992) and Sueur *et al.* (1993)).

GERMANY See page 250.

HUNGARY There were Category A records in 1853 (one), 1963 (one), and 12 between 1989 and 1995, involving 16 individuals. There was a small peak from July to September. A brood was rumoured to have escaped from Budapest Zoo in the late 1970s (Dr Gabor Magyar *in litt.*).

ICELAND In the famous invasion of July 1892, there were three in southern Iceland and four in the north. There have been no records in Iceland since 1980 (Gunnlaugur

Thráinsson *in litt.*).

LATVIA There are three old records involving five specimens (Jānis Baumanis *in litt.*).

LITHUANIA In addition to the four in Kuronian Bay during 19th-27th July 1994 (see page 238), there was one there on 25th August 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 81).

LUXEMBOURG The species is in Category D. Between 1980 and 1995 there were two records on the River Moselle. Both individuals were tame and were certain escapes (Dr Tom Conzemius *in litt.*).

THE NETHERLANDS The first was in 1869 and the second in 1910; both were thought to have been wild. In recent decades, up to 80 individuals have been recorded in late summer in most years. For example, a flock of 15 was photographed in August 1992 at Lepelaarsplassen, Almere, Flevoland. In July-August 1995, a flock of 47 stayed near Huizen, Noord-Holland, while in the same period flocks of nine and six were seen elsewhere. A similar flock of 40-50 stayed at Huizen in July-September 1996. Most Dutch birders find the July-August influx intriguing. It seems clear that the large late-summer flocks originate from abroad and that at least some are wild, as no feral population is established in the Netherlands (see page 250; Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

NORWAY There were 46 records, involving 59 individuals, up to 1993 (*Vår Fuglefauna* 18: 269). The first record was in September 1887, and there were then four records involving at least two individuals in the 1892 invasion: on 2nd August (two), 11th September and 12th October. There were a further seven records (12 individuals) until 1928, including a flock of three on 30th August of that year. The next record was of one in February in 1964, but there was then a gap until May 1970, since when there has been a marked increase, with records in 15 out of 25 years (to 1994). During 1970-92, there was a spring peak, with three arriving in March, two in April and seven in May. There were

then three in June, a peak of nine in July and singles in August and September. The pattern is, therefore, similar to that found in Britain and Ireland, although, not surprisingly, there were no winter records. Interestingly, two July records both involved flocks: five at Flekkeroya, Vest-Agder, on 2nd July 1983, and four at Rinnleiret, Nord-Trøndelag, during 22nd-27th July 1990, with subsequent records of up to three elsewhere until 14th August.

POLAND The species is in Category A of the Polish List on the basis of the following record: one found dead on 30th October 1978 in the Warta River valley near Zagorow (central Poland) which had been ringed as a pullus on 21st July 1973 at Lake Son-kul in Kirghizstan (42°50'N, 74°20'E). The significance of this recovery is obvious. There are two old records in 1870 and 1897, which may have concerned genuine vagrants, as well as some interesting recent records, such as a flock of six very shy individuals during 9th-20th October 1976 at Turawa Reservoir. Ruddy Shelduck was on the Polish rarities list until 1989, by which time there had been 43 records, including three records of groups of four to six and one of a party of nine in September 1988. It was removed from the rarities list in 1989 because of the escape problem. There were no significant influxes during the 1980s (maximum of five records in 1988). The species has also escaped from Wrocław Zoo and feral breeding has occurred (see page 250; Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk *in litt.*).

SLOVAKIA The species is in the Slovakian Category A, with four records between 1980 and 1995, including the one in May 1994 (see page 238; Dr Alfréd Trnka *in litt.*).

SWEDEN There was a total of 117 records prior to 1994. The first was in 1854, followed by three records in the 1892-93 invasion, three during 1900-30, four in 1931-45 and 12 in 1946-60. From the 1960s onwards the Ruddy Shelduck has occurred regularly. There are currently about five to ten records in an average year, mostly in

spring and early summer (April to July), and it is considered that all are likely to be escapes or feral. The species may be under-recorded, however, as not all observers bother to report it. Rarely have more than two been seen together. There is a tendency for the late-summer records to occur in the southeast, such as in Öland.

SWITZERLAND There are three dubious old records, but none from the 1892 invasion. A feral population is now developing in northern Switzerland, based on escapes and their descendants (see page 250). It occurs mainly along the Rhine, the lower course of the River Aare and in the area around Zurich. The number of observations has increased markedly since the mid 1980s, particularly in 1995 and 1996 (Kestenholz 1998). On 27th November 1997, at least 59 were counted on the Lake of Klingnau, a reservoir on the lower Aare in northern Switzerland (Matthias Kestenholz *in litt.*) and 28 at Flachsee/Unterlunkhofen on 29th November (*Brit. Birds* 91: 242). Presumably, this population is the same as that sometimes seen on the Rhinedelta/Lake Constance, just over the border in Austria (see page 245).

IBERIA

Since the species has traditionally moved into Iberia from North Africa, this region is dealt with separately.

PORTUGAL The only accepted record is of one on the Tagus Estuary, near Lisbon, on 10th August 1990, but this may have been an escape as there are some feral birds in Lisbon. Details of a record of four to five in the Algarve could not be traced. Ruddy Shelducks which have escaped from a zoological park near Espinho in northern Portugal are sometimes seen nearby on a small coastal lagoon, Barrinha de Esmoriz (Helder Costa and Luis Costa *in litt.*).

SPAIN The Moroccan birds used occasionally to move northwards into Spain. The species was considered to be mainly a winter visitor in the Marismas del Guadalquivir, and accidental in the rest of Spain. Valverde (1960) stated that, during the 1950s, there were around 100-200 staying from August to March and some remained to breed. Later, however, the situation changed and the observations became sporadic everywhere, so that the species was placed on the Spanish rarities

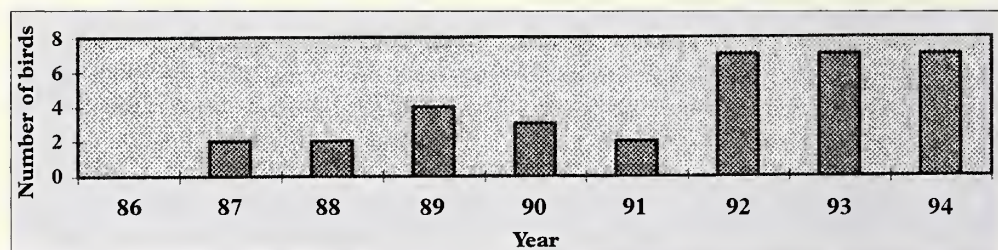


Figure 18. Numbers of records (not individuals) of Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in Spain and Portugal during 1986-94 (there may be further records during 1994-95 not yet reported). As in Britain and Ireland (fig. 2), note how the records increased from 1992 to 1994.

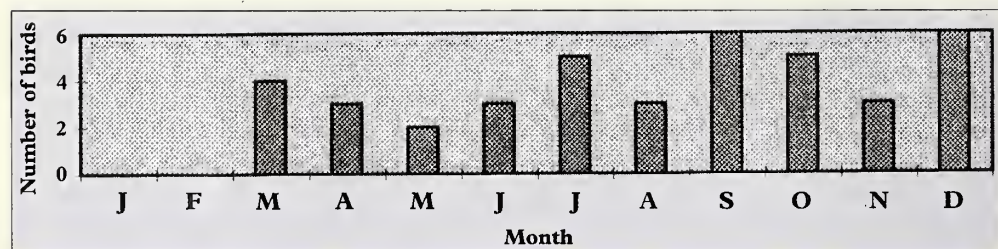


Figure 19. Monthly distribution of records of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* in Spain and Portugal during 1982-95. As in Britain, there is a small March-April peak; numbers rise from June-July onwards, but the peak is in September-December, perhaps suggesting some onward movement from northern Europe.

list when that country's rarities committee was set up in 1984. The following summarises the position for 1982-95. There were 40 records (39 for Spain and one for Portugal), most of which were accepted. An increase in the records noted during the period (fig. 18) may be attributable to a rise in the number of birders, but the impression is that the increase is real. It is interesting to compare fig. 18 with fig. 2, which shows the annual totals in Britain and Ireland. The trends during 1986-94 are very similar. Another similarity with the British and Irish records is that many related to small parties. Twenty-one records related to one bird, with eight of two, four of three, four of four and single records of five, six and seven. There was a fairly even geographic distribution, but with 12 records in northwest Spain. Arrival dates spanned the period March to December, with 70% in the second half of the year and peaks in July, September, October and December, with six records (13 birds) of overwintering (fig. 19). The geographic distribution did not suggest a Moroccan origin, and it is considered that the birds were either feral from other European countries, perhaps the Netherlands, or maybe from eastern Europe. It is thought unlikely that they had all originated from escapes within Spain (Eduardo de Juana *in litt.*).

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The species is a nomadic breeder and winter visitor to the eastern Mediterranean, where its occurrence patterns are notably different from those in northern Europe. Records in this region are not usually tainted with the escape problem.

CYPRUS Although formerly regarded as a rarity, since June 1995 it has been classed as a winter visitor. Maximum counts are of 28 at Larnaca Salt Lake on 22nd December 1984, 26 at Kiti Beach and Spiros Pool on 13th-15th February 1992 and 19 at Spiros

Pool on 24th December 1993 (A. E. Sadler *in litt.*).

GREECE The species breeds in Greece, with not more than 15-40 pairs, although it is erratic and in some years does not nest at all. Although recorded at all seasons, it is otherwise mainly a winter visitor from November to March, mostly in Macedonia and Thrace, with the highest count being of 150 at the Nestos Delta in January 1973 (G. I. Handrinos *in litt.*).

SLOVENIA The only record is of one on 17th March 1984 (origin uncertain) plus a rumour of a flock of six in July 1994 (Andrej Sovinc *in litt.*). A record of five at Ormosko jezero on 8th September 1991 was also published in this journal (*Brit. Birds* 86: 279).

ITALY The Ruddy Shelduck is treated as an irregular migrant and winter visitor, with no pattern of seasonality or regularity. In southern Italy, probably wild individuals (flocks of up to ten) are seen irregularly wintering with Common Shelducks, which are known from ringing recoveries to originate from the Black Sea. These apparently wild Ruddies often occur in small groups. There are no known cases of feral or escaped Ruddy Shelducks breeding in Italy (Nicola Baccetti and Pierandrea Brichetti *in litt.*).

MALTA There are nine documented records up to 1995, six in mid winter and three in March, May and September. Only two people are known to have kept the species in captivity (Joe Sultana *in litt.*).

CONTINENTAL FERAL POPULATIONS

Much has been made in recent years of the existence of feral populations on the Continent, and these are often quoted as being the sources of those individuals seen in Britain and Ireland which are not direct escapes from captivity. The following information has been obtained.

BELGIUM The first feral breeding in Belgium was at Uitbergen, Oost-Vlaanderen, in 1981. In 1990 a pair of

Ruddy Shelducks raised four young at Zingem, Oost-Vlaanderen. In 1997 another pair was seen with twelve ducklings at Eeklo, Oost-Vlaanderen. A previous reference (Vlaamse Avifaunacommissie 1989) to 'several tens of breeding records in Flanders' has not been verified (Gunter De Smet *in litt.*).

CZECH REPUBLIC Single escaped pairs were recorded breeding in 1975 and 1977 in or near Prague and in 1989 in northern Bohemia. In 1994, one was seen paired with a female Paradise Shelduck in the same area (Karel Hudec *in litt.*).

DENMARK The species bred in Denmark for the first time in 1994, a pair rearing one duckling in Himmerland, North Jutland (Ivan Olsen and Brian Rasmussen *in litt.*).

FRANCE The only feral breeding record concerns one on Lake Geneva, near the Swiss border, in 1987 (Dr Philippe Dubois *in litt.*).

GERMANY Barthel (1991) stated that there were five to 50 pairs in Germany. Dave McAdams (*in litt.*) has provided a more detailed summary of the position in Germany after consulting Hans-Günther Bauer (Vogelwarte Radolfzell), Günther Busche (OAG Schleswig-Holstein) and Felix Heintzenberg. The exact position for Germany is not known, as the literature does not cover the whole country and some of the reports concerning both successful and one-off breeding are considered too trivial to publish. Since many birders do not bother to report their sightings, any analysis of the position in Germany has to be of a general nature. The species is undoubtedly common in captivity, and feral breeding has been recorded in a number of widely scattered parts of Germany, but this usually involves only single escaped pairs in any one place. These are most frequently isolated or erratic events which cease after a few years at most. There is no defined concentration or self-sustaining population of feral Ruddy Shelducks in Germany in the way that there is, for example, of Egyptian Geese in England.

The escaped/feral situation with the Ruddy Shelduck in Germany is probably not very different from that in Britain, where feral breeding has been and continues to be occasionally recorded.

THE NETHERLANDS No feral population exists in the Netherlands, but during 1971-94 there were 17 successful breeding records in the wild, less than one per year (Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg *in litt.*).

POLAND During 1981-90, Ruddy Shelducks bred regularly at Wrocław Zoo, Silesia, hatching up to ten ducklings per year. These used to leave when fledged, so that about 70-80 escaped within the ten years, being recorded subsequently throughout the country, but mostly in the vicinity of Wrocław. Single pairs have bred in the centre of Wrocław since 1988, mostly in the wall cavities of sacral buildings, and ducklings are seen along the Odra River in the city. No other breeding place is known in Poland, but free-flying birds were kept in Pila (north Poland) during the 1980s (Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk *in litt.*).

SWEDEN There have been no feral breeding records, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s one bred successfully with a Common Shelduck for several years in Bråviken Bay, Östergötland (Tommy Tyrberg *in litt.*).

SWITZERLAND The most interesting information came from Switzerland. Although the introduction of exotic animals is prohibited, Ruddy Shelducks are often kept full-winged and so escape. The first breeding record was in 1963, at Lake Zurich, and the second in 1987, at Lake Geneva. From then on, breeding attempts have been increasing in the north of the country, based on the River Rhine, the lower River Aare and around Zurich. Single broods were noted annually during 1987-90, in 1992 and in 1995, with two in 1993, five or six in 1996 and four in 1997. In addition, three single broods were noted on the German side of the Rhine in 1993, 1995 and 1996. Also,

three hybrid Ruddy Shelduck x Cape Shelduck broods were noted in 1988, 1996 and 1997 (Kestenholz 1998). Although it would appear that this population is currently too small to be considered self-sustaining, the recent trend indicates that it will continue to grow (see also page 248).

DISCUSSION

The most obvious initial point is that the Ruddy Shelduck is common in captivity and that individuals not infrequently escape. Evidence suggests that, at any one time, there may be a 'background' population of perhaps half a dozen to a dozen at large in Britain. Some of these pair up and breed, and there were at least seven known breeding attempts in England during 1974-97. Most were in the Home Counties around London, where at least some of the escapes probably originated from various zoos and parks.

The species currently resides in Category B of both the British List and the Irish List, largely on the basis of an invasion in 1892, when at least 59 were recorded. It became scarce in the twentieth century, but it has shown clear signs of a general increase since the 1970s, rising to a peak during 1991-94, when it was occurring at the rate of up to 62 per year.

Although the species has declined at the periphery of its range in southeastern Europe, it is now apparently stable in

North Africa and it has shown a marked increase and spread in southwestern Russia since the 1970s, this apparently being related to greater protection. It also appears to have increased in Kazakhstan between 1972 and 1989. A five-fold to six-fold increase in the wintering population in Iran is presumably linked to the situation in Russia and Kazakhstan. The recent upsurge of records in northern and western Europe coincides with this increase and spread in the species' main southeast European and southwest Asian breeding range.

A large total of about 406 across France, Britain and northern Europe (262 in Fenno-Scandia) was recorded in the late summer of 1994. It seems probable, however, that there was some movement between countries, so this total should be treated as a maximum for the invasion. This would suggest a northwesterly movement out of southeastern Europe, or, more probably, southwestern and central Asia. That such movements can occur is confirmed by the record of one ringed in Kirghizstan in 1973 and recovered 4,000 km (2,500 miles) away, in Poland, in 1978. This recovery may suggest that some of our vagrants originate from farther east than is generally supposed. The 1994 invasion was very similar to the one in 1892 in terms of its timing (late summer), the prevalence of small flocks, and the northerly distribution of records. Britain



69. Six Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, October 1994 (Peter Walsh)

received only a moderate influx in 1994, being apparently too far to the south and west to have caught the main movement, which hit Fenno-Scandia.

There has traditionally been a correlation between invasions of Ruddy Shelducks and invasions of Glossy Ibises in that they tend to occur in the same years. As with the Ruddy Shelduck, the Glossy Ibis became rare in the middle part of the twentieth century, but has increased again in recent years. In 1994, a parallel invasion of Glossy Ibises occurred (albeit, typically, later in the autumn). Like the Ruddy Shelduck, this species has a marked tendency to appear in small flocks. It seems reasonable to assume that both species leave their breeding areas in response to food shortages, no doubt brought on by drought conditions, and some limited evidence does, indeed, indicate that this is what triggered the movements in 1994.

In Britain and Ireland, however, large numbers of Ruddy Shelducks were recorded in the three years 1991-93, as well as in 1994, and it seems possible that these were the result of drought conditions which may have worsened over a period of time. There were several notable flocks in 1992 and 1993: up to six

in Norfolk in August-October and five in Essex in September-October 1992, and up to six in Co. Wexford in July and eight in Morayshire in September-November 1993 (subsequently moving south through England; table 1), the latter being at precisely the same site as a flock of five over one hundred years earlier, in the invasion of 1892.

Although a 'background population' of escaped Ruddy Shelducks survives in Britain, even in non-invasion years there is a very strong pattern to the species' occurrences superimposed upon this. A small peak in March-April (which correlates with the timing of its spring migration) is followed by a marked late-summer arrival, with a peak during July to September, the pattern being similar to that noted in the classic invasion years. Small numbers remain to winter, with a low point reached in February. There is evidence to suggest that some which arrive in northern Britain may subsequently move south towards the Continent; interestingly, this phenomenon was also suggested in relation to the 1892 invasion (Ogilvie 1892).

A striking and constant trait shown by the species is that it tends to occur in small



70. Five Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, October 1994 (Mike McDonnell)



71. Six Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea* in flight, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, October 1994 (Paul Hopkins)

flocks, a pattern which is entirely consistent with an irruptive species and at variance with that of other 'conventional' vagrants or escaped ducks. Very few Ruddy Shelducks (1.6%) were aged as juveniles and even fewer (0.7%) were seen to be ringed.

All these patterns are found not just in Britain, but right across Europe, from Iberia in the southwest to Ireland in the west and across northern Europe to Finland. In the eastern Mediterranean, however, the pattern is different: there, the species is a nomadic breeder and winter visitor.

The incursions of Ruddy Shelducks into northern Europe correlate with the timing of their moult migrations. A regular movement has been noted in recent years into the Netherlands, involving up to 80 individuals in late summer. These do not originate in the Netherlands. In Britain, a tiny moulting concentration has also developed at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset, but the origin of all these birds is less clear. A feral population (up to 59 individuals in November 1997) is developing around Zurich in northern Switzerland, along the borders with Germany and Austria. It would be convenient to conclude that the Dutch birds stem from this source, but the movements into the Netherlands would appear to predate the establishment of the Swiss population. It may be possible, therefore, that there is now a regular moult movement of wild Ruddy Shelducks across Europe to these safe

areas. If these birds survive here better than they do in their more traditional moulting areas, then they could be expected to continue to increase. It would surely be a very interesting experiment if the Dutch could catch and ring some of their birds.

The recent upsurge in the Ruddy Shelduck population has frequently been attributed to the establishment of feral populations in continental Europe. Although the species sometimes breeds in the wild, there is no evidence of any self-sustaining feral populations existing in northern and western Europe (each country seems to assume that its Ruddy Shelducks come from a neighbouring country). Such a population may, however, be developing along the Swiss/German/Austrian border. The only other feral population to have come to light is one involving about 300 pairs based on the Askaniya Nova Zoo in Ukraine. This population is, however, so close to the species' natural range – indeed, it mixes with and supplements the local wild population – that it would be a nonsense to say that feral birds could turn up from Ukraine but that wild birds from the same region could not. Nonetheless, Dr V. P. Belik (*in litt.*) has stated that he heard of no unusual movements of Ruddy Shelducks on the Don or in neighbouring areas in 1994, and believes that the 1994 invasion was probably a result of birds dispersing from Askaniya Nova, following the very severe drought there.

CONCLUSIONS

We (the two authors) reached slightly different conclusions.

KEV, who wrote most of the above discussion, considers that, although many Ruddy Shelduck records are attributable to escapes from captivity and their descendants, the *patterns* of occurrence, which are extremely similar right across northern and western Europe, strongly suggest that wild birds are involved. The invasion recorded in 1994 clearly supports this assumption. The view that wild birds are occurring is further supported by the fact that, contrary to popular belief, there are no known self-sustaining feral populations in northern Europe. KEV considers that the species should be regarded as an irruptive vagrant to northwestern Europe with larger influxes probably being triggered by wetland desiccation in the steppe and semi-desert zones of southeast Europe and southwest Asia. Inevitably, droughts are likely to be at their most severe in late summer, explaining the July-August timing of the incursions into northwest Europe. He also considers that it is possible that regular moult migrations, involving wild birds, are becoming established, but this requires further study.

AHJH considers that, in normal years, records in northern Europe are attributable to birds of feral or escaped origin and their offspring, and that the general increase in records in northern Europe since 1970 is likely to reflect creeping naturalisation by feral birds. This view is supported, for example, by the fact that a pair, presumed to be of feral origin, bred in Denmark in 1994. The pattern of records in northern Europe does not correlate well with the Polish recovery, and differs from known movements of wild birds in the eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere. Even in 1994, interpretation of records is made difficult because the only direct causal link which has been established is with the feral population from Askaniya Nova, which could account for the whole invasion.

Nonetheless, the scale of the movement in 1994, combined with its general similarity to that in 1892, makes it seem likely that periodic invasions by wild birds do occur. The fact that unusual movements were not reported from Russia suggests that these birds may originate from farther east, perhaps from Kazakhstan or even Central Asia, a view first suggested by Mike Rogers (*in litt.*). This would explain the predominance of records from northern Europe. It is notable that the birds involved in these movements have not been recorded attempting to breed. If they are mainly second-calendar-year birds or other non-breeders which have moved on from the usual breeding areas as a result of high population levels, perhaps combined with adverse conditions, this might explain their unusual behaviour.

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COUNTY, REGIONAL AND BIRD OBSERVATORY RECORDERS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The main aim of this list is to encourage observers bird-watching away from their home areas to send records to the relevant county recorder. Several counties are divided into areas for recording purposes, but, to save space, and because we believe it is less confusing, the list generally includes only one name against each county or region. The county and regional

names are those adopted by the ornithological organisations concerned, as recommended by the Association of County Recorders and Editors. The names and addresses of observatory recorders or wardens appear separately at the end. We shall be glad to know of any errors, omissions or changes of address, which will be noted in our monthly 'News and Comment' feature.

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Please send any corrections or amendments to: Frances Bucknell, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



LOOKING BACK



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO:

'In this north-east corner of Lincolnshire, bordering the sea, the most obvious and perhaps the best marked spring movements are in connection with the Thrushes (*Turdus*). By the end of February, excepting such as are resident and nesting, the immigrant Mistletoe-Thrushes [*Turdus viscivorus*] (increasing numbers of which annually arrive every autumn) have taken their departure. Old cock Blackbirds [*T. merula*] begin to swarm in coast hedgerows, and in fact in every tall rough fence and coppice for miles inland, till we are amazed at their astonishing plenty and the facilities offered for the "four-and-twenty Blackbirds all baked in a pie."... It is remarkable, considering the millions of Larks [*Alauda arvensis*] which for weeks and months pour on to the east coast from early in August to Christmas, so little is known of their emigration. Such, however, is the case; they succeed in slipping off quietly and unobserved, and probably, as in autumn, in straggling companies, and at night.'

(*Zoologist* 3 (fourth series): 193-194, May 1899)

ALSO 100 YEARS AGO:

'I had never considered the Ring-Ousel

[*T. torquatus*] from an epicurean point of view until the autumn of 1894, when I formed one of a party Grouse-driving on the Stiperstones, a well-known stretch of rough and rocky moorland in Shropshire, when the bird ... was daintily served up as a second course one evening for my especial benefit. In my opinion it beats all the other members of the family *Turdinae* in flavour, but is not comparable with either the Snipe [*Gallinago gallinago*] or Land-Rail [*Crex crex*].'

(*Zoologist* 3 (fourth series): 199, May 1899)

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO:

'During the twelve months ending 31st December 1972, 791,979 birds passed through the hands of the staff of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' Hostel for Animals at London (Heathrow) Airport on arrival from abroad by plane ... It must be stressed that this was the number passing through the Hostel and not the total number of birds arriving at the airport ...'

From 'A further review of the problem of "escapes"' by M. D. England (*Brit. Birds* 67: 177, May 1974)



NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

THREE PIED FLYCATCHERS AND A COMMON REDSTART DEAD IN SAME NESTBOX

On 24th May 1995, while checking nestboxes at Bailey Einon wood, near Llandrindod Wells, Radnorshire, I discovered that one box contained three male Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* and one male Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, all dead. From the condition of the bodies, all four birds had evidently died recently and at approximately the same time. None showed any sign of injury.

Nestbox competition with tits *Parus* has been found to be a cause of mortality of Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* (Condor 97: 445-450), but in this case there was no evidence of occupation by tits. The fact that the dead birds were male suggests that there may have been direct competition for the box, but it is unlikely that this would have resulted in the death of all four.

C. S. Moscrop

Stable Cottage, Doldowlod, Llandrindod Wells
LD1 6HG

EDITORIAL COMMENT

A mystery! Members of the Behaviour Notes Panel could suggest no logical explanation. We welcome reports of any similar occurrences.

HOUSE SPARROWS WITH YELLOW MARKINGS

While on holiday in Weymouth, Dorset, on 19th July 1994, my wife and I were sitting in the formal gardens on the north shore and began to feed some young House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* on biscuit crumbs. Suddenly, amongst them came one which had a yellow cap and a further hint of yellow on its breast. My first reaction was to assume contamination by pollen, but then a second sparrow appeared with the same markings. Fortunately, I was able to get a couple of quick photographs before the birds all flew off (plates 72 & 73).

K. Mathieson

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Members of the Behaviour Notes Panel agreed that pollen contamination was the most likely explanation for the striking appearance of these two House Sparrows. It would not be unexpected for the two individuals to show a similar pattern if both were feeding on pollen, nectar or insects, using the same feeding techniques, on the flowers of the same species of plant.



72. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* with distinctive yellow patches on forehead, forecrown and, to a lesser extent, breast, Dorset, July 1994 (K. Mathieson)



73. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* with distinctive yellow patches on forehead, forecrown and, to a lesser extent, breast, Dorset, July 1994 (K. Mathieson)

COMMON CHAFFINCH RE-LAYING IN SAME NEST

On 27th April 1995, in Bristol, I found the nest of a Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* with three eggs. On 5th May it held five eggs, and on 16th May I ringed four young. The nest was next checked on 2nd June, when it contained three warm eggs; by 8th June, it was empty. Dr Ian Newton (1972, *Finches*) implied that the few pairs of this species which attempt a second brood build a new nest, and M. Schreiber (J. Orn. 128: 388; quoted in BWP 8: 467)

stated that second broods are always in a new nest.

D. Warden

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Although apparently rare, this behaviour has been recorded before (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 40: 288; 49: 504). In the above case, the possibility that two females were involved cannot be ruled out.

LETTERS

THE COMMERCIALISATION OF ORNITHOLOGY

It seems strange that a seven-line suggestion by Ian Moorhouse (*Brit. Birds* 91: 330) that an increase in the average age of observers might help to explain a decline in the numbers of some common birds should be considered worth nearly two

pages of rebuttal by the Director of the British Trust for Ornithology (*Brit. Birds* 91: 374-376), and deserves careful scrutiny. Surely it is not really surprising to find that some bird populations fluctuate with such factors as the climate and human use of the land? Most of the losses have been balanced by other gains, and really the only species

obviously threatened in Britain by human activity at the present time is the Corn Crake *Crex crex*, which is already being cared for by other people.

One receives a growing impression that many of the current stream of appeals from all our ornithological organisations to save such species as the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, and Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* are not really aimed so much at the welfare of the birds (usually well able to take care of themselves) as at that of the growing army of people who are or would like to become professional birdwatchers. I once came across correspondence between George Waterston and James Fisher in the 1940s in which the first asked how he might raise support for ornithology in Scotland, and the second replied that personally he did not go around seeking support, but raised his own. I have also usually tried to do this (since it has fewer strings attached), and deprecate attempts to raise funds by 'crying "Wolf!"' over hypothetical emergencies, since it tends to discredit the real ones.

W. R. P. Bourne

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THE SPECIES-CONCEPTS DEBATE

The paper by Eugeny Syroechkovski, Christoph Zöckler and Elena Lappo on the status of the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* in Siberia (*Brit. Birds* 91: 565-572) presents some fascinating data on the relationship between the two taxa breeding there. The inferences drawn regarding Brent Goose taxonomy do, however, warrant further comment.

Referring to the Mayrian Biological Species Concept (BSC), the authors state that 'Despite some recent statements (Stepanyan 1990; Millington 1997; Sangster *et al.* 1997), the discovery of several mixed colonies of nominate *bernicla* and *nigricans* in northwest Yakutia casts considerable doubt over the validity of separating these

forms into two different species.' I have no problem with this inference with respect to the Mayrian BSC, but I feel quite strongly that there should have been some discussion of how the situation would be interpreted under other species concepts.

In comparison with other European journals, most notably *Dutch Birding*, there has been little mention of these alternative concepts in *BB*, so I feel that I ought briefly to outline the rationale behind two of the most prominent alternatives. The Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC) is most succinctly explained in the context of weaknesses in the Mayrian BSC. In my view, the latter's most significant weakness is that species can be paraphyletic (i.e. unnatural groups where taxa which are not each other's closest relatives are lumped in the same species, whilst taxa which are more closely related to one or other of these lumped taxa are split as separate species on the basis of reproductive isolation). The PSC seeks to eliminate paraphyly by treating all 'diagnosably distinct basal taxa' as separate species regardless of reproductive isolation (so that well-defined taxa such as eastern and western Black-eared Wheatears *Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca* and *O. h. hispanica* would become separate species, but poorly defined ones, such as *argenteus* and *argentatus* Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, would not). For further background on the PSC, I would refer the reader to the articles listed at the end of this letter.

Another prominent alternative concept, termed the 'Modern BSC' by Andreas Helbig and outlined in *Birding World* (10: 198-200), would result in exactly the same species limits as the PSC, but it makes the distinction between two types of species – 'biospecies', which are fully reproductively isolated, and 'allospecies', which may hybridise with other closely related allospecies where they meet, but not to the extent that they cease to become diagnosably distinct basal taxa.

Returning to the paper by Syroechkovski *et al.*, what I find most interesting about their findings is not the fact that mixed pairings

occur, but that the vast majority of Brent Geese in this overlap zone appear to be pure *bernicla* breeding with pure *bernicla* or pure *nigricans* breeding with pure *nigricans*, and that apparent intergrades are few. Combined with the DNA study of Shields (1990), the discovery by Syroechkovski *et al.* is in fact a good argument in support of specific status for the three forms of Brent Goose under the two alternative species concepts mentioned above. Note that Sangster *et al.* (1997) merely stated that the three forms of Brent Goose are specifically distinct under the PSC, and made no claims about their specific status under the Mayrian BSC, and thus the findings by Syroechkovski *et al.* reinforce the arguments presented in Sangster *et al.* (1997), rather than detracting from them as Syroechkovski *et al.* suggested.

I feel that limiting discussions on taxonomy to the consideration of just one species concept is rather short-sighted. There is an ongoing worldwide debate over which species concept will serve ornithology best in the future, and it seems increasingly unlikely that it will be the Mayrian BSC. There have been some excellent papers recently in the 'Trends in Systematics' series in *Dutch Birding*, many of which not only analyse the situation in a species-group under both the PSC and the BSC, but include discussion of which species concept provides a better way of representing the diversity in the group in question – see, for example, the enlightening discussions on stonechats *Saxicola* (DB 18: 133-136), houbara bustards *Chlamydotis* (DB 18: 248-256), bean geese *Anser* (DB 18: 310-316), flamingos *Phoenicopterus* (DB 19: 193-198) and swamp-hens *Porphyrio* (DB 20: 13-22). Could we not have similarly expansive discussions on taxonomy in *BB*, rather than confining the subject to the final three paragraphs of a paper and giving only part of the story?

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This subject is being addressed in a forthcoming paper by Dr Martin Collinson and Dr Jeremy Greenwood.

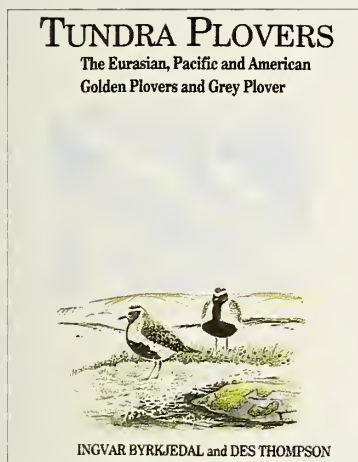
DECEPTION BY BLUE TITS

By coincidence, the note by Paul Brewster concerning a Great Tit *Parus major* which deceived other birds feeding on a birdtable by reacting as if a hawk was nearby (*Brit. Birds* 91: 63) was published simultaneously with my own observations concerning Blue Tits *P. caeruleus* making alarm calls when no hawk was nearby ('Bluetits crying wolf', *BBC Wildlife* 16 (2): 63). Commenting on the letter, Stephen Moss similarly conjectured 'that the false alarm may actually be deliberate. By making the other birds panic and fly off, the bird raising the alarm can get easy access to food, without having to compete for it.'

E. Austin

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REVIEWS



Tundra Plovers: the Eurasian, Pacific and American Golden Plovers and Grey Plover

By Ingvar Byrkjedal & D. B. A. Thompson.
T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1998.
422 pages; 124 figures and tables; 1 colour
plate; 57 black-and-white photographs.
ISBN 0-85661-109-3. £27.95.

The *Pluvialis* plovers form a distinctive genus or subfamily, now the subject of an admirably thorough monograph. The authors, who claim a joint 50 years of study and whose expertise on these species is widely recognised, reveal themselves not only as scientists, but also as enthusiasts for the birds and their habitats. We learn how tundra plovers behave, in the Arctic, on their wintering grounds and on migration, and about their biogeography and morphology. Plumages are described, including the little-known eclipse, and identification is explored sufficiently to satisfy most readers. Estimates of total population are revised sharply upwards for all four species, but there is speculation on the effects of continued habitat loss and, alarmingly, on how global

warming might destroy tundra worldwide within the next century. There are many pleasing illustrations by the first author; diagrams, however, are frequently so complex and printed so small that they fail to make their points clearly, and typographical errors and editing inconsistencies are too frequent. Taking the book as a whole, the authors can claim a first-rate achievement, well worthy of these thrilling birds.

JOHN MARCHANT

Birds of the West Indies

By Herbert Raffaele, James Wiley, Orlando Garrido, Allan Keith & Janis Raffaele.
Christopher Helm/A. & C. Black, London,
1998. 511 pages; 86 colour plates;
distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-4905-4.
£35.00.

This book will set the standard for regional guides in the future. There is the usual Helm layout, but chapters on biogeography and conservation in the Caribbean in particular make this book really special. The text is clear, concise and accurate throughout. There is a useful locality checklist, and the standard of illustrations is high in all but a few cases.

The species accounts have a deliberately brief identification section which focuses on the diagnostic features. The range section concentrates on the Caribbean distribution, and there is a section giving useful additional information.

There are a few typographical errors and the odd contentious point, but in general this is a superb book – indispensable if you are going to, or have been to, the West Indies, and a joy to have even if you never will. In addition, some of the profits from the book will benefit conservation efforts on the islands.

ANDY MITCHELL

Modern Wildlife Painting

By Nicholas Hammond. Pica Press, Mountfield, 1999. 240 pages; over 140 paintings or prints by 89 artists. ISBN 1-873403-55-0. Hardback £35.00.



OK, it's called 'Wildlife Painting', but the vast majority of the subjects are birds. Does this indicate artists' preferences or author's prejudice? Whatever, it certainly qualifies for a review in this journal.

First thing to be clear about: this is not a 'coffee-table' collection, mainly to be looked at. Nicholas Hammond's name is boldly on the cover for a very good reason: he's written a lot of words. This is a book that has to be read. In fact, it is only when you read it and look at the pictures in context that it truly makes sense. In effect, the paintings become illustrations for and of the text, which is arranged not purely historically, but also under 'topics' such as 'Working in the Field', 'Illustration for Identification' and so on. Most of the time, this works splendidly, though there are occasions when you find yourself rummaging ahead, looking for the relevant picture, and sometimes you simply don't find it. (For instance, there are lots of

mentions of Audubon, but not a single example of his work.) No doubt there were restrictions imposed by copyright, cost and available space, but I think the truth is that you will definitely get even more out of the book if you already have a fairly wide knowledge of wildlife art. That said, this is an excellent introduction, history, analysis – call it what you will – of the subject. And, yes, it is good to look at, albeit that inevitably a painting that is actually several feet square does lose something by being reduced to a few inches. But then I'm sure Nick Hammond would agree that there is nothing like the real thing. So, next time you hear of an exhibition of wildlife art, hie yourself along, and – thanks to this book – I guarantee that you will view it with more-discerning eyes.

BILL ODDIE

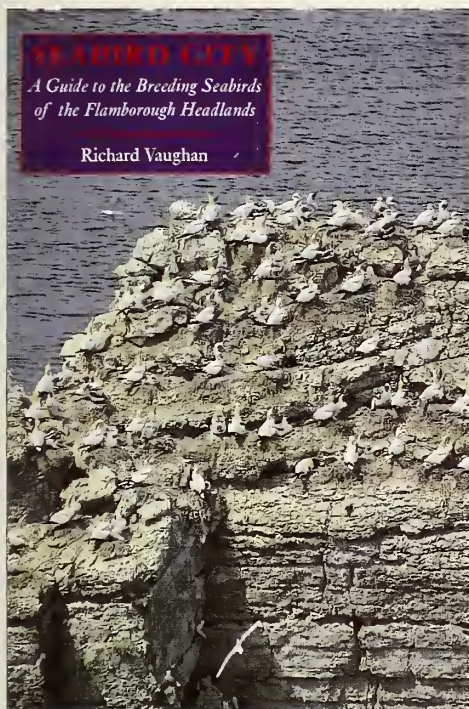
SHORT REVIEWS

Shorebirds. vol. 1

Video by Paul Doherty. Narrated by Bill Oddie. Bird Images, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1997. Running time 81 minutes. £16.95 + £1.00 p&p (£2.00 outside UK).

Excellent-quality video footage features feeding, roosting and even flying waders. Identification is dealt with in detail in the commentary, and tricky species pairs are well covered, with comparative features usually illustrated in side-by-side stills. With odd exceptions, most species are featured in winter, breeding and juvenile plumages, with excellent stills for missing plumages. Calls are often audible and well described and the viewer gets a real feel for the jizz of the birds and their habitats. The commentary is commendably thorough and informative without being dull. A useful feature is an on-screen display showing month and location of all footage.

GRAHAM P. CATLEY



Seabird City: A Guide to the Breeding Seabirds of the Flamborough Headlands

By Richard Vaughan. Smith Settle, Otley, 1998. 206 pages; 130 colour and black-and-white photographs; 1 map. ISBN 1-85825-110-9. Paperback £9.95.

Enthralled by the summer seabirds of Yorkshire's great white cape since 1966, Richard Vaughan has now written a guide to them and their cliffs. Five chapters answer questions on the composition, scale and monthly rhythm of England's largest seabird colony, fully illustrated by instructive photographs of bird behaviour and cliff sectors. Intriguing tales of the 'climbers' (egg-harvesters) add some precarious humanity to this unpretentious but informative book on half a million marine beings.

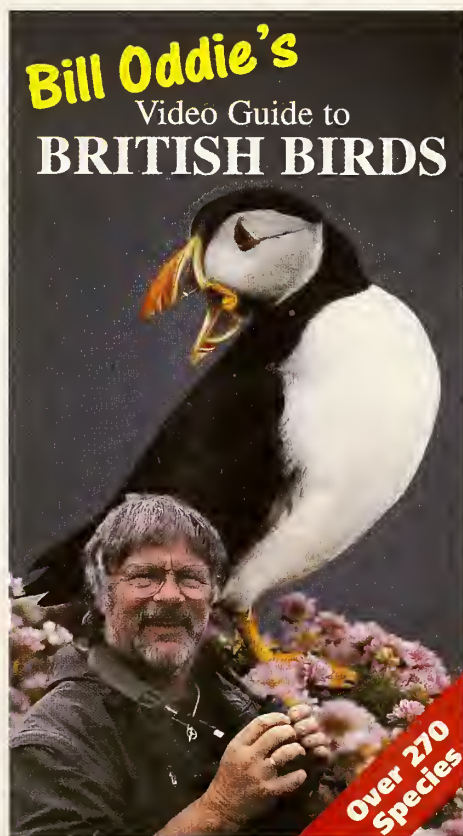
D. I. M. WALLACE

Bill Oddie's Video Guide to British Birds

Video by Paul Doherty. Commentary by Bill Oddie. Bird Images, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1998. Running time 2 hours 47 minutes. £16.95.

Covering over 270 species occurring regularly in Britain, this is a very useful reference tool for birders with some experience. Image quality is generally excellent, and good use is made of freeze-frame and stills to highlight specific identification points. A variety of plumages is shown for each species, and on-screen comparisons are made for some problem groups. Bill Oddie's businesslike commentary concentrates on identification features, some songs and calls, and behavioural characteristics.

MATTHEW HARDING



NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY WENDY DICKSON AND BOB SCOTT

North Staffs: snipe and landowners lose

We have previously drawn attention (*Brit. Birds* 91: 206) to the dramatic decline in breeding-bird populations on the North Staffordshire Moors, no doubt largely linked to agricultural changes that have included overgrazing and drainage. It had been hoped that, with modern site designation, the downward spiral could be halted. Regrettably, this was not to be.

In 1997, Birchenough & Goodwin purchased land within the Leek Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), an area which supported, amongst others, breeding Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. The new owners received a visit from officers of English Nature (EN), the Government's statutory advisor on nature conservation, who explained to them their responsibilities as owners of SSSI land.

This they chose to ignore, and drained some 17 ha and constructed hard-standing by importing rubble and soil. EN obtained a court injunction to prevent further damage, and subsequently the very first Special Nature Conservation Order (SNCO) was issued to add further protection to the land.

It was in August 1998 that the owners finally came to court, and were fined £1,000 with £1,000 costs when they pleaded guilty to allowing operations that caused damage to wildlife within an SSSI without the consent of English Nature. This is only the fourth prosecution for damaging SSSIs that EN has taken since it was formed in 1990. All four have been successful. Regrettably, damage to SSSIs continues, either by direct action or by neglect. Can we hope for a stronger line from EN in the future?

The real disaster is on the ground, and local birders report that the snipe were back, drumming and displaying over the drained area last spring, but, with a bone-dry field, they did not stay. Another small statistic in a population's decline.

Rarity from a flying aircraft

The rarities report for the Netherlands, covering the year 1996 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 145-167), includes, in addition to the fascinating reading as to why records were rejected (BBRC please note), the claim for 'the first accepted rarity seen from a flying plane.' This relates to a Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* seen on 7th June, 48 km west of Texel. Do any readers know of similar circumstances elsewhere in the World?

Great Black-headed Gull in Cyprus

An analysis of Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* occurrences in Cyprus is being carried out by Bob Frost and Peter Flint. They would be grateful for unpublished records of this species from Cyprus, giving date and time, number of birds, location and if possible the weather conditions. All records will be acknowledged. They should be sent to 14 Chaucer Way, St Ives, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE17 4TY.

Raptor migration and White Wagtails in Malta

News has reached us of some success in protecting migrant raptors passing through Malta. BirdLife Malta fielded a large number of birdwatchers in the autumn of 1998 at the main observation points of Buskett and Dwejra, and recorded over 3,665 migrating raptors, including 2,000 Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and 1,200 Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*. Thanks to vigorous media coverage instigated by BirdLife, the police took steps to patrol Buskett, and in this locality massacre by the 'hunters' was practically stopped. BirdLife Malta is certain, however, that large numbers were killed for 'sport' in other areas.

Meanwhile, some 20 BirdLife Malta members were censusing the White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba* roost in Great Siege Square, Valletta, and recorded 2,247 birds arriving from areas surrounding the city. It is perhaps fortunate that the Maltese 'sportsmen' do not have a carte blanche in the city centre. Support for the work in Malta should be addressed to BirdLife Malta, 57 Marina Court, Abate Rigord Street, Ta'Xbiex, MSD 12, Malta.

Greylag Geese in Kent

Your reporter (BS), to his utmost and everlasting shame, must admit to being part of the establishment that scattered Canada *Branta canadensis* and Greylag Geese *Anser anser* throughout Kent in the 1960s. Flocks of these species now get labelled 'feral' (or 'introduced' or 're-established') and are considered just a little boring by the average birder. Not every Greylag Goose in Kent is of similar origin, however, and a look at some recent records in Dungeness Bird Observatory Reports gives the stories of at least three individuals marked with colour rings or neck collars. The first, ringed in Norway in June 1989, was in Kent in spring 1992, the Netherlands in December 1992, Spain in February 1993 and the Netherlands again in March 1993. The second was in the Netherlands in November 1989, Spain in February 1990, the Netherlands in November 1990, Spain in February 1991, the Netherlands in November 1991 and Kent in April 1992. The third example was ringed unfledged in Sweden in June 1992, and reported from the Netherlands in autumn 1992 and Kent in autumn 1993. It may be worth treating those goose flocks on the local gravel pit with a little more respect in future.

Director for Scottish Seabird Centre

News of the new Scottish Seabird Centre to be opened in May 2000 has received little publicity in the birding press. Progress is being made, however, and the new Director, Tom Brock, and his assistant, Caroline Marchant, have now been appointed. The new centre, with considerable support from the Millennium Commission (National Lottery Funds), Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd and East Lothian Council, is being built on a site at North Berwick Harbour. On completion, the centre will contain an extensive reference library and audio-visual database

concentrating on the seabirds in the Firth of Forth. More exciting for the visiting birder will be the remote-controlled cameras located on the seabird nesting islands, relaying pictures back to the centre. It is also intended to include 'study facilities', a shop and a restaurant. All-singing, all-dancing, high-tech. visitor centres are not new, but they cost large sums of money to maintain. We trust that the sums have been carefully calculated and that the project is a great success. Further details from Scottish Seabird Centre, PO Box 2020, North Berwick EH39 5YH.

Money, Ruddy Ducks, reserves and Red Kites

The Red Kite *Milvus milvus* re-establishment programme has been a great success in both Scotland and England. At the same time, the species has undergone a dramatic upturn in its fortunes in Wales, and it can only be a matter of time before the Welsh population spills over the English border. We have just been perusing the 1998 newsletter for the North Scotland Red Kite Project, which contains the individual histories of 45 separate sites in the Highlands, together with details of the public-viewing facilities at the North Kessock Tourist Information Centre. Site 31 is good fun: the nest contained a hessian sack, a pair of gent's pyjama bottoms, some carpet underlay, a workman's glove and a tea-towel with a map of Devon. The current success of the (now) four introduction sites and the Welsh population does make us wonder why plans are being progressed for yet another re-establishment project for this species in northern England. Yes, it is good publicity for birds and conservation (and conservation bodies). Yes, it is receiving sponsorship to offset much of the cost. But is it necessary? Surely there are other more-deserving projects that could do with the

funds? After all, the Red Kite seems pretty secure.

Together with the postal delivery that informed us all about the Red Kite, came the exciting news that a joint reserve project in Suffolk is underway. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and English Nature are co-operating over the establishment of a reserve at Dingle Marshes. The two charities need, however, to raise £1,000,000 to cover the costs and the future management of the site. The Lottery Fund has contributed £500,000 and English Nature a further £50,000 – that leaves some £450,000 to go. The money will be raised, of course, and so it should be. After all, in the very long term, the reserve mechanism is probably the only certain way forward for nature conservation. There is some money floating around, however. How about the next Red Kite Project or the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* control programme? Unlikely to be necessary (the former) and unlikely to be successful (the latter).

It is perhaps not surprising that English Nature has changed its views on Ruddy Duck control. The RSPB was a keen supporter of the programme – English Nature less so. English Nature now has a new boss inherited from the RSPB. The Countryside Council for Wales is still not supporting the programme, although the trial cull will take place partly in Wales. Somewhere along the line, the practicalities of bird conservation seem to be getting lost.

Minsmere exports its expertise

It is a far cry from the days when wardens and reserve managers sat within the boundaries of their designated sites barely looking over the surrounding countryside. Things have changed, and the RSPB is now exporting years of accumulated knowledge that resides with its reserves staff. We have just heard that Geoff Welch, manager at Minsmere, Suffolk, has been passing on RSPB knowledge on a truly global scale. In the later part of 1998, he was in

Turkey helping with the organising and undertaking of winter waterfowl counts. He returned just in time to spend the Christmas period in Djibouti, helping with the preparation of that country's biodiversity action plan. At the time of writing, he is preparing to depart on three-month's secondment to BirdLife International in Jordan, where he will be training field staff and preparing management plans.

Costly mistake at Milford Haven

The fact that Milford Haven Port Authority was fined £4 million – the biggest fine ever handed down in a pollution case – along with £825,000 costs to Environment Agency Wales, will be no compensation to the 4,000 Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* and other wildlife in Carmarthen Bay that got caught up in the disastrous *Sea Empress* debacle on 15th February 1996. The Port Authority admitted that its management systems in terms of providing safe navigation, training and classification of vessels required a major overhaul, which has now been put in place. It is no comfort, however, to hear that one Environment Agency Board Member, in acknowledging a successful prosecution, stated that he was still very concerned about the horrendous risk of major incidents occurring around our coast because of unsafe shipping.

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

has announced the results of a research project which it commissioned with Swansea University. A key feature has been the discovery of up to 17,000 Common Scoters feeding successfully in Carmarthen Bay at any one time. Similar numbers had been present before the oil spill, which suggests that the population and the food source on which it relies are now in a healthy state once more. There remain significant questions about the extent and severity of the impact of the oil spill on the sea-bed creatures on which the Common Scoters feed, an issue which is continuing to be studied. There is little doubt that a large proportion of Icelandic, Scandinavian and Russian breeding Common Scoters pass through and winter in British waters. Carmarthen Bay is probably the most important site in the UK for this species. Britain has national and international obligations to safeguard Carmarthen Bay and, in view of this, it is proposed as a Special Protection Area under the EC Birds Directive. All good news so long as we have no more oil.

Brent Geese and Linseed

The following item was gleaned from *Legal Eagle*, the RSPB Investigations Newsletter. The Linseed *Linum usitatissimum* harvest on an Essex farm was halved due to a lack of grazing by Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, says John Threadgold, who farms at Great Wakering near Foulness. In 1997, he reported bumper yields of a ton per acre (2,500 kg/ha) from winter Linseed which had responded to Brent Goose grazing by producing a foot-high (30 cm), much-branched, easy-to-harvest crop. It is not known why the Brent Geese did not feed on the farm the following winter, but the consequence was a tall, woody crop producing a little under half a ton per acre (1,250 kg/ha).

Introduced waterbird species

Mike Blair has been appointed on a one-year contract at the BTO to assess the status and effects of introduced waterbirds on native waterbird species across the area covered by the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). Waterbirds, as defined by the AEWA, are those species that are ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle, and within the AEWA area this comprises some 170 species. Mike requires data or anecdotal evidence on whether introduced waterbirds are having any actual or potential effect on native waterbird species. If you can assist in any way, Mike can be contacted at the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2TE; telephone: 01842-750050.

Young ornithologists in Switzerland

If you are between 15 and 25 years of age and would like to witness some spectacular bird migration in the Swiss Alps, then the International Ornithology Camp may be for you. Some years ago, groups of young European birdwatchers organised, in turn, a series of camps taking place in different countries. The Groupe des Jeunes de 'Nos Oiseaux' (GdJ) is now intending to relaunch this exchange between 21st August and 1st September 1999 at Col de Jaman in the Swiss Alps. In addition to bird ringing and bat migration, they are promising some spectacular scenery in some excellent birding sites, together with Yellow-billed Cough *Pyrhocorax graculus*, Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*. Further details and a registration form from GdJ 'Nos Oiseaux', Jérôme Gremaud, Sur Perrausa, CH - 1632 Riaz, Switzerland.

Help needed at Strait of Gibraltar

The Strait of Gibraltar has long been known as a funnel for soaring migrant birds to make their way into Africa each autumn via the short sea crossing. For five years, from 1997, the Regional Government of Andalucia, Southern Spain, has provided the funding to study this migration. Co-ordination of the fieldwork is undertaken by Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the BirdLife partner in Spain. The request has now been made for volunteers to assist with the monitoring between mid July and mid October 1999. Food and accommodation expenses are fully covered for anyone wishing to assist for periods in excess of 12 days. For further details, contact Programma Migres, Sociedad Española de Ornitología, C/Miguel Bravo Ferrer, 25 bajo, E-41005 Sevilla, Spain. Phone & fax: 00-34-95-464-42-94; e-mail: migres@seo.org.es. Applications need to be submitted before 15th May 1999.

The Met. protects wild birds

A leaflet entitled *Protecting Wild Birds* produced by the Metropolitan Police was a surprise, but on reflection there is no reason why it should be. The aim of the publication is to seek the public's support in the Met's campaign against wildlife crime. In common with all police forces throughout Britain, the Metropolitan Police has a Wildlife Liaison Officer (WLO), based at New Scotland Yard. It is the WLO's task to co-ordinate and support the work of the Met's Area Wildlife Officers and work closely with a range of organisations, both governmental and non-governmental. Copies of the leaflet are available from the Met's Wildlife Crime Unit, Room 927, New Scotland Yard, Broadway, London SW1H 0BG.

Ngulia Ringing Group

The bird-ringing activities at Ngulia, Kenya, with the impressive list of Palearctic migrants and Afrotropical species, will be well known to British ringers. In the autumn of 1998, nearly 22,000 birds were ringed. Enquiries from experienced ringers to assist in the autumn of 1999 would be welcome. If you fancy handling and ringing a Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni*, Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*, Abyssinian White-eye *Zosterops abyssinica* or one of the other 80-odd species of Afrotropical birds ringed in 1998, you should contact Graeme Backhurst, Box 15194, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone: 00-254-2-891-419; e-mail: graeme@healthnet.org.ke

The good, the bad and the ugly?

Three types of suppressor (withholder of rare-bird information) are listed by that much-maligned provocateur, 'Jack Snipe', who pontificates in the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society Newsletter. In the August/September 1998 issue, the categories are given as:

1. Those who quite legitimately do not release news of sensitive rarities (e.g. rarities on private land to which general access is barred).
2. Those who selfishly think 'I'm not having twitchers on my local patch.'
3. Those who want to stay 'one-up', so decide that 'I'm not having twitchers see my good rarity.'

'Jack Snipe' goes on to say: 'If you find something at your local patch that you know others will want to see and there are no significant access problems, then you should feel obliged to release the news.' That is not the stated position in the Code for Rarity-finders (*Brit. Birds* 75: 302-303) where it was stated that 'The finder should feel no obligation to spread the news of a rarity, whatever the circumstances'; but perhaps things have moved on since 1982? If even 'Jack Snipe' says 'Tell all', it looks as if the twitchers' pressure groups have won a convert. Will the fatwa on 'Jack Snipe' be lifted now, so that he (or she) will be able to come out of hiding?

While we are on the subject, it may be helpful to repeat the Code for Twitchers, originally published in *British Birds* (75: 303).

1. If you are among the first to hear of a rare bird, satisfy yourself that the site can cope with the likely influx of observers before spreading the news.
 2. Respect confidential information.
 3. Especially if you have previous experience of visiting rare-bird sites, offer advice on any special arrangements which may need to be made, and offer on-site assistance if you are able.
 4. Before setting out, ensure that you are fully informed concerning how to reach the site, and any special arrangements which have been made.
 5. If you pass on the message, do so carefully and in full.
 6. At the site, park sensibly and safely, follow any instructions responsibly, and always put the welfare of the bird first.
 7. Never turn a blind eye to any misdemeanours committed by others.
 8. Do not try to get closer than anyone else to view or – especially – to photograph the bird: let binoculars, telescopes and telephoto lenses cover the distance.
 9. Be tactful, informative and friendly towards non-birdwatching onlookers or local people: they will probably be interested to know what is going on.
 10. Be patient and restrained, especially if the bird moves suddenly to a new site nearby: give time for a new plan to be devised to cope with the situation.
 11. Observe the Country Code at all times.
- It seems to us that that Code is followed pretty well these days.

Coarse fishing and canal-side birds

A recent analysis of comparative BTO data from the Waterways Breeding Bird Survey has looked at the differences between bird populations on canals where a close season for fishing was imposed (32) and those without a close season (34). The results were very similar: 13.5 birds per kilometre with a close season, 13.3 per kilometre without. It has been shown that having a

fully open season for coarse fishing does not affect fish populations. There is, therefore, the suggestion that a case is made for lifting the close season on the remaining 70% of English and Welsh canals. A word of caution. The bird populations may be similar, but it would be well worth examining the *breeding success* on the canal banks before such steps are taken.

Sherry and the Coto Doñana

OK, so you did not manage to solve the 1998 Christmas puzzle (set in the December 1998 issue of *British Birds* with the solution in the March 1999 issue). We strongly recommend, however, that you may like to sample this Vinicola Hidalgo SA sherry, a particularly fine Palo Cortado. Vinicola Hidalgo has decided to dedicate the profits from the sale of this wine towards the campaign for the clean-up of the Coto

Doñana nature reserve. Readers will recall that, in early 1998, this reserve suffered an enormous catastrophe when some 5 million cubic metres of toxic waste were spilt from a mining company's reservoir. This must be the best reason ever for sampling some fine Spanish sherry. For more information contact Timothy Holt, Vinicola Hidalgo y Cía, SA; tel: 00-34-956-360516; fax: 00-34-956-363844; e-mail: vinicolahidalgo@vinicola-hidalgo.es

We can also now reveal the good news that Vinicola Hidalgo SA will be sponsoring our Christmas puzzle for at least a further three years.



MONTHLY MARATHON

The species in the photograph (plate 32, repeated here as plate 74) is clearly a wader, and its general shape and coloration shows that it is either a *Calidris* or a *Tringa* sandpiper. The lack of patterning and its dull colour tells us that it is in winter plumage. Bills are, of course, of considerable importance in wader identification, but, as this bird's bill is completely obscured, its legs are perhaps the next most useful feature to concentrate on. From the thigh and tibia visible on the right leg, and the tibia and knee visible on the left, the bird is obviously very long-legged, and this feature alone rules out most species of *Calidris*. Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, until recently included in the genus *Calidris*, is perhaps the only wader in this group which could show such a long tibia, and the leg colour would fit that species quite well too. In winter, however, Stilt Sandpiper shows some streaking on its flanks and undertail-coverts, whereas this bird's are pure white. What options are there in *Tringa*? The four species of redshank and yellowlegs can be ruled out on leg colour alone, leaving the two greenshanks and Marsh Sandpiper

T. stagnatilis. One of the striking features of Nordmann's Greenshank *T. guttifer* is its short tibia, and its legs also tend to be rather yellow, so that species can be ruled out (it is also not yet on the West Palearctic List). Common Greenshank *T. nebularia* – the choice of 10% of entrants this month – shows broader white fringes to the scapulars, with some black subterminal spots in winter plumage, whereas the patterning on this bird fits Marsh Sandpiper perfectly.

Along with most competitors, Marathon leader, Peter Lansdown, correctly identified this Marsh Sandpiper, so has achieved the ten-in-a-row sequence ahead of everyone else which has won him a free SUNBIRD trip to Africa, America or Asia. Congratulations, Peter! He joins a talented group of winners: Pekka Nikander (Finland), Anthony McGeehan (Northern Ireland), Ralph Hobbs (England), Martin Helin (Finland), Hannu Jannes (Finland), Paul Archer (Republic of Ireland), Peter Sunesen (Denmark), Anthony McGeehan (again!), David McAdams (Germany) and, now, Peter Lansdown (Wales).

As a result of Peter Lansdown's win, a new Marathon is now in progress. Last month's photograph (plate 48) is the first stage and this month's (plate 75) the second. The closing date for entries for both is 15th June 1999, and the two answers may be submitted together on one postcard.

Start on the new Marathon now. Good luck, everybody!

DAVID FISHER

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



74. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, The Gambia, January 1991 (Gordon Langsbury)



75. 'Monthly marathon' Photo no. 153. Second stage in eleventh 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send your answer for this photo and also the first stage (plate 48 in the April issue) on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1999.

RECENT REPORTS


COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

This summary of unchecked reports covers 8th March to 4th April 1999. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Walton Reservoir (Surrey), 16th March; Stowbridge Pit (Norfolk), 17th-27th March; long-stayers at Ashford (Kent), to at least 23rd March; Porthellick Pool, St Mary's (Scilly), to 18th March, previously Tresco; Nanjizal (Cornwall), 3rd April. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Holme Pierrepont (Northamptonshire), 4th April. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Pair, St Ives (Cambridgeshire), 11th-19th March, and Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire), 22nd March to 4th April. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* Female, Briggs Rocks, Groomsport (Co. Down), 20th March to 5th April. **Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* Pale-phase adult, first seen North Slob (Co. Wexford), late February, then Rogerstown (Co. Dublin), early March, and then near

Broadway and Killinick (both Co. Wexford), during 2nd-4th April. **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* Elmley (Kent), 30th-31st March. **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* First-winter, Nimmo's Pier (Co. Galway), 2nd April. **American Herring Gull** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* Three first-winters and two adults, Killybegs (Co. Donegal), 10th March. **Thayer's Gull** *L. thayeri* First-winter again present, Newport Dump (Co. Mayo), 1st April. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* Waxham area (Norfolk), 28th March. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* The Naze (Essex), 2nd April. **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Marazion (Cornwall), 1st-5th April. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Porthellick Pool, St Mary's (Scilly), 18th-19th March.

CORRECTION

Photographs attributed to Steve Young in the April issue Recent Reports (*Brit. Birds* 92: 216-220) should have been attributed to Steve Young / *Birdwatch*. 



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76. Pair of Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Cambridgeshire, March 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



77. Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk, January 1999 (Neil Bowman)



78. Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, Watergrove Reservoir, Greater Manchester, April 1999 (Mike Malpass)



79. Black-bellied Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, North Walsham, Norfolk, March 1999 (Neil Bowman)



80. Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Tilbury, Essex, March 1999 (Reston Kilgour)

RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Ardnave Loch, Islay (Argyll), 6th November to 9th December. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Wembury (Devon), 6th-8th April. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Cliad, Coll (Argyll), 28th November. **Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* Ben Macdui (Moray & Nairn), 2nd August. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Barton-on-Humber (Lincolnshire), 26th June. **'Black-headed' Wagtail** *Motacilla flava feldegg* Conwy (Caernarfonshire), 8th-9th May. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* St Ives (Cornwall), 23rd October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola*

Fair Isle (Shetland), 30th September; 1st-3rd October; 3rd-6th October. **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* Sumburgh/Grutness (Shetland), 27th August to 5th September. **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* Bardsey (Caernarfonshire), 19th September. **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* Noss (Shetland), 8th June. **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephala* Fair Isle (Shetland), 8th-11th October.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ





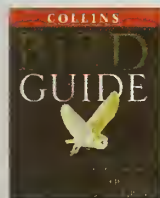
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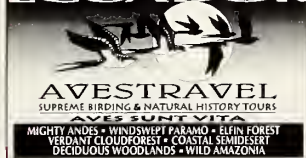
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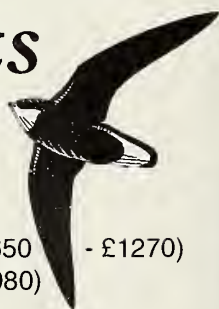
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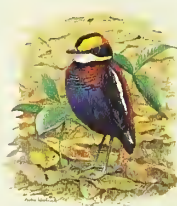
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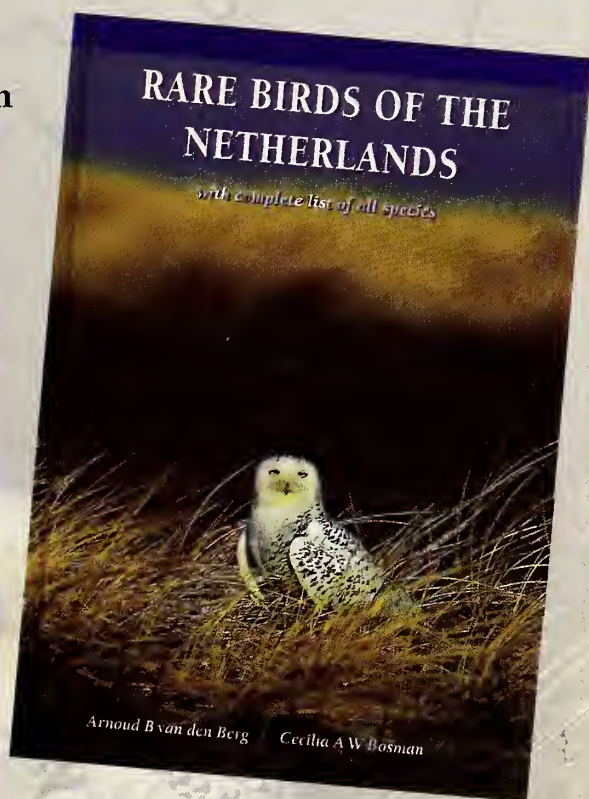
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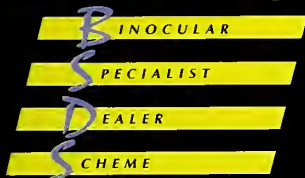
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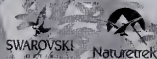
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EUROPEAN NEWS

'European News' is the only reliable, continent-wide report on trends and significant nationally accepted records of rarities.

Some of the highlights in this forty-fifth report include:

- 60,000-86,000 singing male Corn Crakes *Crex crex* in 'the Baltic States'.
- The first West Palearctic record of Marbled Murrelet *Brachyramphus marmoratus*.
- The first breeding in Europe by White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*.

This six-monthly compilation, inaugurated 23 years ago (*Brit. Birds* 70: 218), provides the only reliable continent-wide summary of important occurrences, ranging from changes in breeding or wintering distributions to irruptions, nationally rare birds and vagrants.

Records are supplied by a network of national correspondents appointed by each country. A few entries (always marked by an asterisk) are still subject to assessment by the relevant national rarities committee, but all others are accepted, verified records.

As well as covering the whole of Europe, records notified by the national representatives for adjacent countries within the Western Palearctic are also included. This forty-fifth report includes officially notified records from 38 countries.

These summaries aim to include *all* records of:

1. Significant breeding-range expansions or contractions.
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6. Major national rarities, including the first five national records, even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*

SWEDEN Highest-ever numbers: 30 records involving 31 individuals in 1996 (223 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 128-129).

WHITE-BILLED DIVER *Gavia adamsii*

IRELAND Fifth record: Brandon Point, Co. Kerry, on 4th October 1996 (first for over 11 years).

PIED-BILLED GREBE *Podilymbus podiceps*

IRELAND Fourth and fifth records: near Kilbaha, Co. Clare, on 11th-14th December 1997 and Rostellan, Co. Cork, during 1st February to 23rd March 1997 and 10th October to 31st March 1998 (presumed returning individual).

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophris*

FRANCE Fifth record: Ouessant, Finistère, on 25th November 1998*.

ALBATROSS *Diomedea*

FRANCE Vagrant: immature at sea south of l'Île de Porquerolle on 5th May 1995 (*Ornithos* 5: 154) and Cap Gris-Nez, Pas de Calais, on 17th September 1998*.

CAPE VERDE/MADEIRA PETREL

Pterodroma feae/madeira

AZORES At sea: about 400 km northwest of Madeira in Azorean waters on 17th August 1996.

BULWER'S PETREL *Bulweria bulwerii*

FRANCE Fifth record: 19th May 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 154).

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis*

IRELAND Huge concentrated passage: in late August 1997, witnessed at three Co. Cork watchpoints, though likely that there was some duplication: peak on 26th August, when 2,608 passed Old Head of Kinsale, 2,600 passed Galley Head and 5,279 passed Cape Clear Island.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record for Jersey: 11th October 1997 (*Soc. Jersiaise Ann. Bull.* 1998: 203).

WHITE-FACED STORM-PETREL***Pelagodroma marina***

PORTUGAL At sea: Gorringe Bank area, some 300 km southwest of Cape St Vincent, Portugal, on 20th August 1996, where now seen almost annually.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

IRELAND One of largest-ever movements: minimum of 1,000 off Kilcummin Head, Co. Mayo, on 10th September 1998.

SWINHOE'S STORM-PETREL***Oceanodroma monorhis***

FRANCE Second record: one off Belle-île, Morbihan, on 11th October 1998*.

SPAIN Second record: one lured with tape to islet in Cabrera group, Balearics, on 13th August 1997 (first was on 13th July 1994, *Brit. Birds* 89: 25).

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

LATVIA Increase: at least 700 at end of July 1998 (twice as many as in 1997) at Nagļi fishponds, Rēzekne.

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 28 colonies with total of 18,474 pairs in 1996.

SPAIN Second established colony in central Spain: ten nests at Gasset reservoir in June 1998 (*Ardeola* 45: 241).

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

BULGARIA Largest-ever total: 468 along Bulgarian Black Sea coast in census in January 1999, including 266 at main breeding area near Tyulenovo, Dobrich Region, on 16th January 1999.

PYGMY CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

ITALY Second breeding site: Valle Dragoiesolo, Venice lagoon, on 14th May 1997 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 88: 264; *Riv. Ital. Orn.* 68: 108-110).

WHITE PELICAN *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

SPAIN Vagrant/escape: adult at Tarifa, apparently crossing the Gibraltar strait into Morocco, on 18th August 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 99).

UKRAINE Large flock: about 6,000 on Alibey Lake, Odessa region, in July 1998 (largest flock in previous ten years was 2,000).

GREAT BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

NETHERLANDS Decrease: after severe winter of 1995/96, 133 breeding pairs counted in 1996 (cf. 158 pairs in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 90: 239).

SWEDEN Breeding count: 293-296 booming males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 95-96).

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus*

FINLAND Fifth record: 19th May 1996 (*Linnut* 32: 19).

NETHERLANDS Stable after decrease: seven to ten pairs during 1992-98.

NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

AUSTRIA High breeding numbers: 41 breeding pairs at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, in 1998.

CATTLE EGRET *Bubulcus ibis*

CZECH REPUBLIC Fifth record: one in breeding plumage on Lužnice river near Trěbň, southern Bohemia, on 6th-7th May 1998 (of four previous observations, two presumed to refer to escapes).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

AUSTRIA First confirmed breeding record: at least three to five breeding pairs at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, in 1998.

FAROE ISLANDS Fifth record: Sandoy during 20th-29th May 1998*.

ICELAND Fifth record: 4th June 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 19).

LITHUANIA Largest-ever total: seven on 7th April 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 72).

SPAIN First colony on coast of Bay of Biscay: at least 17 nests on islet of Izaro, Basque Country, in June 1998.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Egretta alba*

AUSTRIA Census: at least 660 breeding pairs at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, in 1998 (cf. peak of 737 pairs in 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 39).

BELARUS Increasing: 28 breeding pairs on 7th June 1998 in mixed colony with Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* at mouth of Lan' river (cf. first to third breeding records in 1994-97, *Brit. Birds* 91: 39).

BELGIUM Unprecedented influx: 22 records involving 24 individuals in 1995 (*Aves* 34: 198-199).

DENMARK Small winter influx: at least three individuals during November 1998 to January 1999.

IRELAND Second to fourth records: Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 26th October 1997, and Croagh Estuary, Schull, Co. Cork, during 31st October to 3rd November 1997 (presumably same individual), Black Glen, Co. Londonderry, during 8th October to 29th November 1997, and Roundwood, Co. Wicklow, during 29th November 1997 to 22nd February 1998.

LITHUANIA Influxes or increase: at least 13 during 14th May to 22nd September 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 72) and at least ten during 17th August to 30th September 1997 (*Ciconia* 6: 64).

GREAT BLUE HERON *Ardea herodias*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tenerife from December 1998 into 1999*.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

AUSTRIA High breeding numbers: 286 breeding pairs at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, in 1998 (perhaps a result of increased fieldwork).

BELARUS Second record in past 30 years: adult on Pripyat floodplain near Turov on 24th and 28th August 1998.

FAROE ISLANDS Third record: Sandoy on 16th July 1998*.

YELLOW-BILLED STORK *Mycteria ibis*

SPAIN First record (origin unknown): adult at Albufera lagoon, Mallorca, Balearics, on 5th-13th December 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 99).

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

ICELAND Second record: 10th-14th June 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 20).

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

CANARY ISLANDS Feral population: pair breeding on Lanzarote and another on Fuerteventura during spring 1998, and singles on Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

AUSTRIA Census: 63 breeding pairs at Lake Neusiedl, Burgenland, in 1998.

DENMARK Increasing slowly: three pairs fledged seven young at Vejlerne, N-Jutland, in 1998. Correction: total number in 1996, including breeding birds, was 57-79 (not 57-59 as noted in *Brit. Birds* 92: 66).

GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus ruber*

SWITZERLAND Vagrants: flock of six first-winters (one ringed) from 1st September to 5th November 1998 (accepted in Category A).

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*

ICELAND Third record: 3rd August to 26th October 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 20).

BLACK SWAN *Cygnus atratus*

LITHUANIA First and second records (included in Category D): 4th July 1996 and 5th-12th July 1996 (*Ciconia* 6: 64).

SWEDEN Category D records: three in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 137).

There have also been reports in recent years from Bulgaria, Iceland, the Netherlands and Poland (*Brit. Birds* 87: 3; 88: 28, 265).

TUNDRA SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*

LITHUANIA First and second breeding records: single pairs successful in 1997 and 1998 (*Ciconia* 6: 76).

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*

IRELAND First record of race *rossicus*: four in Co. Louth from 27th December 1997 to 22nd February 1998.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*

LITHUANIA First record: flock of four during 27th September to 3rd October 1997 (*Ciconia* 6: 64).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

ICELAND Fourth and fifth records of nominate race: 2nd January to 12th March 1996, and 4th-18th February 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 20).

PORTUGAL Second record: juvenile of nominate race, with Greylag Geese *A. anser*, on 23rd November 1996.

LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser erythropus*

ESTONIA Unusually high numbers: nine on 11th October 1997 and 44 on 12th October 1997 at Tali, Pärnu district, and up to 31 during 26th April to 15th May 1998 at Haeska, Matsalu Nature Reserve, Lääne district.

BAR-HEADED GOOSE *Anser indicus*

LATVIA First record: two off Ventspils, with six Greylag Geese *A. anser* and one White-fronted Goose *A. albifrons*, on 29th May 1998 (cf. recent records in Lithuania, Malta, Norway and Ukraine, *Brit. Birds* 82: 322; 84: 228; 85: 7; 87: 313; 91: 40).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

HUNGARY First record: 7th February to 2nd April 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 40; *Túzok* 3: 57-60).

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*

DENMARK Highest-ever count: 44,900 at Rømø-dæmningen, S-Jutland, on 4th October 1998.

GREAT BRITAIN Increase: maximum of over 24,000 on the Solway in March 1997 suggests a doubling of the Svalbard population over the previous ten years.



81. Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* of race *nigricans*, Poland, October-November 1998 (*Arkadiusz Sikora*)

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla*

GREAT BRITAIN Exceptional influx of light-bellied race *hrota*: count of 4,389 in January 1997, including 4,092 at Lindisfarne alone, was almost double previous maximum.

POLAND First record of mainly Nearctic race *nigricans*: adult at Władysławowo, Gdańsk Bay, from 30th October to 8th November 1998 (plate 81).

RED-BREASTED GOOSE *Branta ruficollis*

SWITZERLAND First record: 19th January 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 66; *Nos Oiseaux* 45: 212-213; *Orn. Beob.* 95: 264).

RUDDY SHELDUCK *Tadorna ferruginea*

CANARY ISLANDS Breeding: two pairs, with seven and nine ducklings, on Fuerteventura in March 1998*.

SLOVENIA Third record in past 50 years: 2nd March 1996 (*Acrocephalus* 92: 27).

WOOD DUCK *Aix sponsa*

CANARY ISLANDS First record (origin unknown): Tenerife on 14th December 1995 (*Ardeola* 45: 100).

AMERICAN WIGEON *Anas americana*

BELGIUM Vagrants: 2nd November 1995 and 11th-12th November 1995 (*Aves* 34: 199-200).

DENMARK Vagrants: 15th April to 25th May 1996 and 19th April 1997 (five previous records; *DOFT* 92: 257).

FINLAND Vagrants: 29th April to 24th June 1996 and 8th-11th May & 14th June 1996 (18 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 19).

FRANCE Vagrant: 27th March 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 154).

GERMANY Vagrants: seven in 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 179).

ICELAND Vagrants: eight records in 1996 (83 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 21).

PORTUGAL First record: two males and a female on 4th November and 9th December at S. Jacinto Nature Reserve, Aveiro, during 4th November to 8th December 1996.

SPAIN Vagrant: female from 4th February to 3rd March 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 101).

SWEDEN Vagrants: nine in 1996 (most in one year; 22 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 130-131) and two in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 146).

FALCATED DUCK *Anas falcata*

FRANCE Second record (Category D): 15th-16th February 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 176).

BAIKAL TEAL *Anas formosa*

GERMANY Presumed escape: 1st May 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 221).

COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca*

DENMARK Vagrant of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: 1st May 1997 (ten previous records; *DOFT* 92: 257).

FINLAND Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: four in April-June 1996 (16 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 20).

FRANCE Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: 26th February to 18th March 1996, 10th April 1997, 16th April 1997 and 5th December 1997 (three in one year is a record; *Ornithos* 5: 155).

GERMANY Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: five in 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 179).

ICELAND Vagrants of race *carolinensis*: five records in 1996 (54 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 22).

SPAIN Vagrant of race *carolinensis*: male from 19th February to 4th March 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 101, 102).

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

SLOVENIA Midwinter census: 19,796 on 16th-17th January 1999, the commonest species of waterfowl (*Acrocephalus* 92: 6-22).

BLACK DUCK *Anas rubripes*

DENMARK Deletion: this species has been deleted from the Danish List (*DOFT* 92: 257).

ICELAND Vagrants: two records in 1996 (28 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 22).

SPAIN Second record: 13th November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 240; *La Garcilla* 102: 26; *Ardeola* 45: 101).

SWEDEN Second record: 27th May to 4th June 1997 (first was on 17th-19th November

1973; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 147).
Deletion: August 1994 reports (*Brit. Birds* 88: 266) were not accepted.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL *Anas discors*

DENMARK Vagrants: three in April-June 1997 (nine previous records; *DOFT* 92: 257).

FINLAND Vagrant: 15th-19th May 1996 (ten previous records; *Linnut* 32: 20).

FRANCE Vagrants: 29th March 1996, 5th-12th April 1997, 27th April 1997 and 17th-19th May 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 155).

GERMANY Vagrants: 1st May 1996 and 27th June 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 180).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 16th-19th September 1997 (13 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 147).

NORTHERN SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

MADEIRA Second record: 1st January 1996.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD *Netta rufina*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: at least 65 pairs in 1996 (cf. at least 27 pairs in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 267).

RING-NECKED DUCK *Aythya collaris*

FRANCE Vagrants: 18th November to 14th December 1996, and eight records involving six individuals in 1997 (more than any previous year; *Ornithos* 5: 156).

GERMANY Vagrants: four in 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 180).

ICELAND Vagrants: four records in 1996 (1994 record listed in *Brit. Birds* 91: 41 was date extension, not an extra record; 29 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 23).

SPAIN Vagrants: first-winter male and first-winter female on 2nd October 1996, and another female on 31st December 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 101).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 8th May 1996 (18 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 131).

LESSER SCAUP *Aythya affinis*

CANARY ISLANDS Flock overwintering: eight on Tenerife from November 1998 to at least February 1999*.

DENMARK Second record: 25th March to 16th April 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 258).

COMMON EIDER *Somateria mollissima*

AZORES Third record: male in Ponta Delgada Harbour, Ilha de S. Miguel, during most of 1996.

POLAND First breeding record: two displaying pairs and egg damaged by predator found at Vistula-Smiala mouth in April-June 1997. Deletion: June 1989 report (*Brit. Birds* 86: 280) has now been rejected.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*

POLAND First record of race *americana*: male at Władysławowo, Gdańsk Bay, on 8th February 1995.

SURF SCOTER *Melanitta perspicillata*

DENMARK Vagrants: male on 20th-22nd June & 16th September to 15th October 1997, and male on 5th October 1997 (14 previous records; *DOFT* 92: 258).

FINLAND Vagrants: 17th May 1995 and 11th-19th May 1996 (35 previously accepted records; *Linnut* 32: 20).

ICELAND Vagrants: two records in 1996 (two in 1994 now not considered to have been 'probably the same as in 1993', *Brit. Birds* 89: 250; *Bliki* 16: 21; 29 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 23).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 4th April 1996 (43 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 131).

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*

FINLAND First record of Siberian race *stejnegeri*: 27th May to 8th June 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 42; *Linnut* 32: 20).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE *Bucephala islandica*

SPAIN First record: first-winter female at Traba lake, A Coruña, from 26th January to 22nd March 1997*.

COMMON GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*

SWITZERLAND Second breeding record: July 1997 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 213; *Orn. Beob.* 95: 264).

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*

DENMARK Highest-ever count: 10,000-12,000 at Arresø, Zealand, on 23rd November 1998.

GREAT BRITAIN Record winter numbers: more than 6,500 at WeBS sites in January 1997, half as many again as previous record numbers, reflected further population increase and a cold-weather influx.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*

POLAND First and second records: male, showing some features of hybrid, at Bojano, near Gdańsk, on 17th May 1997 and, at same locality and probably the same individual, during 17th May to 21st June 1998.

SPAIN First breeding of pure stock: in July and August 1998, female with chick at Ullibarri-Gamboa dam, Alava, where up to 11 were present during winter 1996/97 and nine during winter 1997/98.

WHITE-HEADED DUCK *Oxyura leucocephala*

BULGARIA Largest-ever count: 780 at Vaya (or Burgas) Lake, Burgas Region, on 9th February 1999.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*

DENMARK First record: Skagen, N-Jutland, on 29th-30th March 1998.

FRANCE Northward breeding expansion: pair bred successfully in Grands Causses, Aveyron/Lozère, in spring 1998*.

SPAIN First breeding in northeast Spain: nest with chicks in Lleida province in May 1998.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE *Haliaeetus albicilla*

BELARUS Increase in wintering population: 40-60 in Palesky Radiological-ecological State Reserve in February 1998.

RÜPPELL'S VULTURE *Gyps rueppellii*

SPAIN Third record: immature feeding with Griffon Vultures *G. fulvus* at Montejo de la Vega, Segovia, on 3rd July 1994.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*

ANDORRA Breeding at high altitude: pair regularly breeding at 1,740 m, the maximum altitude recorded for Western Europe; seen hunting at 2,500 m.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: about 1,200 pairs in 1996.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: about 110 pairs in 1996.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 23 pairs (raising 23 young) in 1996.

LEVANT SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter brevipes*

MOROCCO Deletion: 3rd April 1996 report (*Brit. Birds* 90: 241) subsequently not accepted (*Porphyrion* 9: 172).

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*

FRANCE Largest-ever invasion: 64 records involving 73 individuals in 1997, with at least 60 during January-April 1997 (cf. 36 in 1986/87; *Ornithos* 5: 82-85, 158-159; these data supplement those given previously, *Brit. Birds* 90: 241).

SPAIN Second record and amendment: Llobregat delta, Barcelona, in January 1991 (*Ardeola* 45: 103), so January 1996 record (*Brit. Birds* 91: 43) becomes the third.

SWITZERLAND Influx: five in January-February 1997 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 213-214; *Orn. Beob.* 95: 265-266; cf. influx into eastern France at same time, *Brit. Birds* 90: 241).

SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila clanga*

CYPRUS Fourth record: juvenile on 5th October 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 23).

STEPPE EAGLE *Aquila nipalensis*

DENMARK Vagrant: 16th October 1997 (15 previous records; *DOFT* 92: 259).

FINLAND Vagrants: 15th May 1993 and 1st May 1996 (21 previously accepted records; *Linnut* 32: 21).

POLAND Vagrant: immature at Pniewo, near Lomza, on 30th May 1998.

SWEDEN Vagrants: three in 1997 (29 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 148-149).

GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos*

BELARUS Increase in wintering population: five to ten in Palesky Radiological-ecological State Reserve in February 1998.

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraaetus pennatus*

LITHUANIA First record: pale phase on 5th & 23rd July and 9th November 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 73; 6: 65).

BONELLI'S EAGLE *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

FRANCE Vagrants outside breeding range: at col d'Organbidexa, Pyrénées-Atlantiques, on 26th August 1998, and at Breuil-Magné, Charente-Maritime, on 12th-18th September 1998. Breeding status: breeding population continues to decline.

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

DENMARK Vagrant: 16th October 1997 (five previous records; *DOFT* 92: 259).

GERMANY First for over 20 years: Heligoland on 12th August 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 182).

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*

FINLAND Invasion: 99 in 1996, about 20% from late April to June and 80% from late August to September (*Linnut* 32: 22).

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

ANDORRA Third record: at 1,400 m on 16th June 1998 (first record was in 1992, second concerned two on 4th May 1997).

ELEONORA'S FALCON *Falco eleonorae*

POLAND Third record: subadult at Bystre, near Białystok, on 19th May 1988 (there are also four subsequent records).

LANNER FALCON *Falco biarmicus*

SPAIN Vagrant/escape: El Prat de Llobregat, Barcelona, on 21st June 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 104).

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus*

LITHUANIA Recolonisation: pair bred on building in Klaipeda in 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 73); first confirmed breeding since June 1933; previously nested in trees.

LUXEMBOURG First breeding since early 1960s: three pairs raised ten young in 1998, two pairs, each with three young, on natural cliffs, and one pair, with four young, on a road-bridge.

PTARMIGAN *Lagopus mutus*

BULGARIA First certain record: female at Atanasovo Lake Reserve, Burgas Region, on 31st December 1996 (*Orn. Mitt.* 50: 43-44).

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

SWEDEN Breeding count: 300-309 singing males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 95, 107-108; this information replaces that given previously, *Brit. Birds* 92: 69).

CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

LITHUANIA Breeding census: 25,000-30,000 pairs in 1996-97 (a much higher total than previous estimates of 2,000-3,000 pairs in 1985-88 and 3,000-5,000 pairs in 1994-95; *Acta Zoo. Lituanica* 8 (2): 156-158). Cf. 26,000-38,000 singing males in Latvia in 1996, and 10,000-18,000 pairs or singing males in Estonia in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 83; 91: 245).

NETHERLANDS Dramatic increase: 33 territories in 1996, at least 200 in 1997 and at least 500 in 1998.

SWEDEN Breeding count: 346-355 singing males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 95, 108-109).

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*

DENMARK Highest-ever count at single locality: 3,721 passing Gedser, Falster, on 3rd October 1998.

DEMOISELLE CRANE *Anthropoides virgo*

ESTONIA First record: Valguta, Tartu district, on 3rd May 1998*.

HUNGARY Fourth record: 20th-24th October 1993 (*Túzok* 3: 44).

SPAIN Vagrant (origin unknown): adult apparently wintering with Common Cranes *Grus grus* at Navalvillar de Pela, Badajoz, on 4th & 16th February 1996, and presumed to be the same bird, at Gallocanta lake, Zaragoza, on 7th-8th March 1996 (*Ardeola* 45: 104-105).

LITTLE BUSTARD *Tetrax tetrax*

CYPRUS Second recent record: female on 12th December 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 28).

HOUBARA BUSTARD *Chlamydotis undulata*

CYPRUS Third record: 24th November 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 29).

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

CANARY ISLANDS First breeding on Gran Canaria: pair with chick on 13th June 1998.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 7,200 pairs in 1996.

STONE-CURLEW *Burhinus oediconemus*

AUSTRIA Increase: at least 11 pairs at the only two breeding sites in eastern Austria in 1998, the best season in recent years (cf. six to nine pairs in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 270).

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE *Glareola nordmanni*

AUSTRIA Vagrants: two at Seewinkel, Burgenland, on 8th August 1998.

BELGIUM Second record: 31st May 1982 (*Aves* 34: 202).

DENMARK Fifth record: 18th-19th May 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 259).

SWEDEN Vagrants: two on 30th May 1996 and four in August 1997 (12 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 133; 30: 150).

KILLDEER PLOVER *Charadrius vociferus*

SPAIN Second record: Baiona, Pontevedra, on 14th November 1997*.

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 235 pairs in southwest and 71 pairs in north in 1996.

LESSER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius mongolus*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: Fuerteventura on 26th April 1998*.

SWEDEN Third to fifth records: 10th-14th July 1996, 12th July 1996 and 14th-15th July 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 133).

CASPIAN PLOVER *Charadrius asiaticus*

CYPRUS Vagrants: 16th-20th April 1998 and 16th April 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 31).

AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis dominica*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: first-winter on Fuerteventura in November and December 1990.

DENMARK Third to sixth records: 26th July 1997, 2nd September 1997, 4th-6th September 1997 and 21st & 24th September 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 259).

FRANCE Vagrant: 1st-10th April 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 161).

ICELAND Vagrant: 13th-19th October 1996 (nine previous records; *Bliki* 19: 25).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 29th July 1996 (eight previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 134).

PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis fulva*

DENMARK Vagrant: 11th September 1993 (six previously accepted records; *DOFT* 92: 259).

FINLAND Invasion: 50 in 1996 (25 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 23).

GERMANY Vagrant: 22nd-23rd December 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 184).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 7th-8th August 1996, 29th September to 6th October 1996 and 25th July 1997 (20 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 133; 30: 151).

AMERICAN/PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER *P. dominicalfulva*

FRANCE Vagrant: 5th May 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 161).

SWEDEN Vagrants: five in 1996 and one in 1997 (45 previous records, involving 49 individuals, including those specifically identified; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 134; 30: 151).

SOCIABLE LAPWING *Vanellus gregarius*

FRANCE Vagrants: 16th February to 21st March 1997, 22nd February 1997, 19th October 1997, 11th November 1997 and 22nd November 1997 (five in one year is the highest-ever total; *Ornithos* 5: 161) and 10th-11th October 1998*.

GERMANY Vagrants: 24th March 1996, 29th-31st March 1996 and 12th-16th May 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 184).

HUNGARY Fourth record: 6th-12th October & 1st-6th November 1996 (amending details given *Brit. Birds* 91: 45; *Túzok* 3: 44).

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING *Vanellus leucurus*

NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Assendelft, Noord-Holland, from 21st February to 8th March 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 70, plate 14), again present from 4th September to 9th October 1998 (*Dutch Birding* 21: 15-19).

SWEDEN Second and third records: 22nd-24th June, 26th June and 27th June to 8th July 1997, and 10th-14th July 1997 (four localities, in four provinces, but treated as two records involving two individuals; first was on 10th May 1975; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 151).

UKRAINE First breeding records: two pairs with clutches on Salgir river, Nizhnegorsky region, Crimea, on 16th May 1997, but breeding success not known.

In the 1990s, there have been records of vagrants in Bulgaria, the Canary Islands, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Tunisia, *Brit. Birds* 84: 6, 230; 87: 317; 88: 270; 89: 32; 90: 84; 91: 45, 245-246; 92: 70.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER *Calidris pusilla*

AZORES Vagrant: juvenile at Paul da Praia, Ilha Terceira, on 13th August 1996 ('this species is regular in autumn').

WESTERN SANDPIPER *Calidris mauri*

FRANCE Third and fourth records: marais Vieux/Les Sables d'Olonne, Vendée, on 9th-12th September 1998* and marais de Guérande/Sissable, Loire-Atlantique, on 20th-21st September 1998*.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

FRANCE Large influx: 'up to ten times normal numbers' in second half of September 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 49-53); this quote augments the data listed previously (*Brit. Birds* 90: 242).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*

DENMARK Vagrant: 27th-30th May 1997 (nine previous records; *DOFT* 92: 260).

FRANCE Vagrants: 24th-26th July-1997, 18th September 1997 and 8th November 1997 (more than any previous year; *Ornithos* 5: 162).

GERMANY Vagrant: 16th-18th October 1996 (seven previous records; *Limicola* 12: 184).

ISRAEL First record: Ma'agan Mikhael on 29th September 1998*.

SWEDEN Vagrant: 16th May 1996 (11 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 134).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

AZORES Vagrants: four at Praia da Vitória, Ilha Terceira, on 24th October ('this species remains surprisingly rare').

BELGIUM First record: Longchamps on 4th-8th October 1995 (*Aves* 34: 202).

FINLAND Fourth record: juvenile in Hailouto on 20th-22nd September 1998 (previous records were on 20th September 1962, 1st September 1971 and 1st September 1973).

FRANCE Vagrant: 30th August 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 162).

ICELAND Second and third records: 30th August 1996 and 14th September 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 26).

ISRAEL First record: Ma'agan Mikhael on 17th October 1998*.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER *Calidris melanotos*

BELGIUM Vagrants: five in 1995 (*Aves* 34: 202).



82. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Netherlands, 9th August 1998 (Arnoud B. van den Berg)

BULGARIA Second record: Durankulak Lake, Dobrich Region, on 31st August 1998 (first was at Aldomirovtzi Marsh, Sofia Region, on 18th April 1988).

DENMARK Vagrants: 2nd June 1997, 16th-19th July 1997 and 10th-21st August 1997 (23 previous records; *DOFT* 92: 260).

FINLAND Vagrants: 12th July 1996 and 20th-21st September 1996 (37 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 23).

FRANCE Vagrants: five in September 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 162).

GERMANY Vagrants: four in 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 184).

HUNGARY Amendment: 15th-22nd September 1996 (not 15th-21st September 1996 as given *Brit. Birds* 91: 46; *Túzok* 3: 45).

ICELAND Vagrants: 7th-14th September 1996 and 21st September 1996 (30 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 26).

ISRAEL Vagrants: 17th September 1998 and 29th September 1998.

MALTA Second record: September 1998 (first was in 1982).

PORTUGAL Vagrant: 20th October 1996.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 16 records in 1996 (the highest-ever annual total), and 11 in 1997 (92 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 134; 30: 150-151).

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: juvenile at Klingnau Reservoir on 13th-16th September 1998.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER *Calidris acuminata*

IRELAND Second record: Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 14th-15th September 1997.

NETHERLANDS Second record: adult, Ezumakeeg, Lauwersmeer, Friesland, on 6th-23rd August 1998 (plate 82; possibly also a second individual on 6th-8th August 1998*).

STILT SANDPIPER *Micropalama himantopus*

DENMARK First record: Vejlerne, N-Jutland, on 23rd-24th April 1998.

FRANCE Fifth record: 26th July 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 163).

NETHERLANDS First record: adult at Blauwe Kamer, Rhenen, Utrecht, on 24th July 1998.

SWEDEN Third record: 12th May 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 134-135).

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER *Tryngites subruficollis*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Tenerife on 23rd October 1998*.

DENMARK Vagrants: 19th September 1995 and 14th August 1997 (13 previously accepted records; *DOFT* 92: 260).

FRANCE Vagrants: 14th-22nd May 1995, 14th-16th September 1995, 18th September 1996 and 28th September 1996 (eight 1995 records and five 1996 records were noted previously, *Brit. Birds* 90: 243; 91: 246; *Ornithos* 3: 162; 4: 151; 5: 163).

GERMANY Vagrants: 24th-27th May 1996 and 3rd October 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 186).

MOROCCO First record: Oued Souss estuary on 26th-27th September 1998*.

PORTUGAL Third record: Viana do Castelo on 24th September 1996 (second was in September 1994, *Brit. Birds* 91: 46).

SWEDEN Vagrants: five records involving six individuals in 1996 and one in 1997 (21 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 135; 30: 152).

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

SWEDEN Passage totals: outside breeding areas in northwestern Sweden, 71 in spring (including 40 lekking males) and 76-77 in autumn 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 110-111).

PENTAIL SNIPE *Gallinago stenura*

ISRAEL Second record: Kefor Ropin, Bet Shean Valley, on 19th-26th November 1998 (first was at Eilat in November 1984, *Brit. Birds* 81: 17).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

Limnodromus griseus

FRANCE First record: adult at Falguérec, Séné, Morbihan, from 27th August to beginning of October 1998*, first identified as Long-billed *L. scolopaceus*.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER

Limnodromus scolopaceus

FRANCE Vagrant: 7th May 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 163).

GERMANY Third to fifth records: 6th-11th August 1996, 26th September to 3rd October 1996 and 18th-19th and 26th October 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 186).

SWEDEN Vagrant: 5th-8th October 1996

(ten previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 135).

LONG-BILLED/SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER

L. scolopaceus/griseus

BELGIUM Vagrant: adult in breeding plumage at Bredene on 4th May 1995 (probably Long-billed; *Aves* 34: 203).

DENMARK Vagrants: 7th September 1995 and 23rd August 1996 (four previously accepted records; *DOFT* 92: 260).

FINLAND Vagrants: two on 24th August 1996 (*Linnut* 32: 23).

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

DENMARK Second and third records of race *islandica*: 7th May 1997 and 20th August 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 260).

SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW *Numenius*

tenuirostris

GREECE Wintering: Evros Delta from 4th December 1996 to 3rd March 1997.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

GERMANY First breeding record in central Europe: clutch of four eggs being incubated on 25th June 1997 at sand-pit in northern Bavaria (*Limicola* 12: 258-262).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS *Tringa flavipes*

CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant: Tenerife on 7th & 10th October 1998*.

DENMARK Third record: 4th-6th June 1997 (May 1987 record, previously listed as the third, *Brit. Birds* 82: 326, has been rejected, *DOFT* 92: 260).

FRANCE Vagrant: 25th October to 9th November 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 163).

PORTUGAL Vagrant: 15th November 1996.

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*

CANARY ISLANDS First and only record: Lanzarote in August 1985 has been accepted (*Ardeola* 45: 107). Deletion: April 1993 report noted as potential third record (*Brit. Birds* 87: 318) has not been accepted.

SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: ten records in 1996 (89 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 135-136).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*
NETHERLANDS Breeding increase: one pair in 1993, three pairs in 1994, four pairs in 1995 and ten pairs in 1996.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER *Actitis macularia*
CANARY ISLANDS Vagrant overwintering: Tenerife from September 1997 to February 1998*.

WILLET *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*
FRANCE First record this century: juvenile moulting into first-winter plumage at lagune de La Belle-Henriette, Vendée, on 12th-13th September 1998*.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Phalaropus tricolor*
GERMANY Vagrant: 14th-24th November 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 190).

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*
SLOVENIA Fourth record: Postojna on 10th June 1996.

GREAT SKUA *Catharacta skua*
HUNGARY Fifth record: 25th October 1996 (*Túzok* 3: 48).
SLOVENIA Third record: Lake Ormož on 18th September 1997 (first and second were over 50 years ago; *Acrocephalus* 89: 96-98).

GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ichthyaetus*
BELARUS First record: Belye fish-farm, Gomel region, on 27th May 1998.
FRANCE First record: Capitello, Corse-du-Sud, on 3rd November 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 165).
MALTA Second record: January 1999 (first was in 1909).

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*
DENMARK Correction: first breeding of this species in Denmark was not in 1996 as noted in *British Birds* (92: 72): the species has bred several times previously (the first time was at Enø, Zealand, in 1970); in 1996, however, the first breeding attempt in the Danish part of the Wadden Sea took place.

NETHERLANDS Breeding increase: 175 pairs in 1993, 206 pairs in 1994, 247 pairs in 1995 and 327 pairs in 1996.

LAUGHING GULL *Larus atricilla*
ICELAND Vagrant: 4th August 1996 (eight previous records; *Bliki* 19: 27).
NETHERLANDS First record: Harderwijk from 25th September to mid October 1993 (record of 22nd August to 20th October 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 247; 92: 72-73, becomes second; *Dutch Birding* 21: 19-22).

FRANKLIN'S GULL *Larus pipixcan*
FRANCE Vagrants: 16th-17th March 1997 and 1st November 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 165).
GERMANY Third record: 3rd September to 12th October 1996 (*Limicola* 12: 192).

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini*
HUNGARY Second record: Balmazújváros Viragoskut fishponds during 29th September to 3rd October 1998 (first was in 1941).
IRELAND Strong passage in August: peaks of 215 at Bridges of Ross, Co. Clare, on 29th August 1997 and 346 at Brandon Point, Co. Kerry, on 29th August 1997.
LATVIA Fourth record: at least two immatures at Pape, Liepaja, on 5th November 1998 (three previous records were in 1919, 1922 and 1938).
SWEDEN Highest-ever annual totals: 24 records in 1996 and about 140 in 1997 (112 previous records: *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 136-137; 30: 154-156).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: first-year at Genfersee on 11th September 1998.

BONAPARTE'S GULL *Larus philadelphia*
DENMARK Date extension: individual in November-December 1995, already noted as second record (*Brit. Birds* 91: 247; *DOFT* 91: 142), seen again on 7th-8th March 1996 (*DOFT* 92: 260).
ICELAND Vagrant: adult 14th-23rd April 1996 (eight previous records; *Bliki* 19: 27).
SWEDEN Second record: 9th October 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 137-138).

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*
 NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 132,000 pairs in 1996.

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus genei*
 POLAND Second record: Brzostowo, Biebrza Marshes, on 21st May 1998 (first was in July 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 334).
 SWITZERLAND Second to sixth records: 30 individuals in May 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 49; *Nos Oiseaux* 45: 216-217, 247-249; *Orn. Beob.* 95: 268-269).

RING-BILLED GULL *Larus delawarensis*
 BELGIUM Vagrants: four in 1995 (five previous records; *Aves* 34: 204).
 FRANCE Vagrants: 11 records involving five individuals in 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 165).
 ICELAND Vagrants: four records in 1996 (46 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 27).
 SWEDEN Vagrant: 13th April to 2nd July 1997 (nine previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 156).

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*
 NETHERLANDS Breeding census: 6,500 pairs in 1996.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*
 NETHERLANDS Increase: 37,000 breeding pairs in 1994, 40,400 pairs in 1995 and 50,000 pairs in 1996.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus cachinnans*
 BELGIUM First record of nominate race: Zeebrugge on 8th April 1995 (*Aves* 34: 204).
 SWITZERLAND First record of nominate race: 21st-26th December 1997 (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 217; *Orn. Beob.* 95: 269).

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoideus*
 FRANCE First record of race *kumlieni*: 28th February 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 166).

ROSS'S GULL *Rhodostethia rosea*
 ESTONIA Second record: first-year at Põösaspea, Lääne district, on 10th November 1995.
 ICELAND Vagrants: two records in 1996 (27 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 27).

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybridus*
 CROATIA Range expansion: spreading from east to NW Croatia, with breeding on three fishponds in Pokupsko basin in 1997 and 1998, as many as 100 pairs at one of them in 1998.

NETHERLANDS First breeding since 1965: nest with two eggs at northern Randmeren, Flevoland, in 1997.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*
 LITHUANIA Influx and breeding: normally rare, but in 1996 there were at least 150 pairs (*Ciconia* 5: 81).

SWEDEN Massive influx: 52 records involving about 1,542 individuals, mostly in mid May, in 1997 (104 previous records involving 127 individuals; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 158-160).

BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOT *Uria lomvia*
 BELGIUM Fourth record: found dead on 21st January 1995 (*Aves* 34: 207).

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*
 ESTONIA First record: Sörve sääar, Saaremaa Island, on 6th November 1998*.

MARBLED MURRELET *Brachyramphus marmoratus*
 SWITZERLAND First West Palearctic record: first-winter, showing characters of Asiatic race *perdix*, at Zollikofen, Zurich, on 15th-18th December 1997, found drowned in fishing net on last date.

LAUGHING DOVE *Streptopelia senegalensis*
 CANARY ISLANDS Second to fourth records: Fuerteventura on 25th September 1998, 30th November 1998, and three on 10th December 1998.
 PORTUGAL Vagrant: adult with Collared Doves *S. decaocto* at Parede, Lisboa, on 5th-7th January 1996, 'escape from captivity can not be fully ruled out'.

Cf. recent records in the Canary Islands, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden (*Brit. Birds*

86: 42, 285; 87: 9, 319; 88: 37; 89: 36, 258; 91: 49, 248; 92: 74), mostly considered to relate to escapes from captivity.

NAMAQUA DOVE *Oena capensis*

CYPRUS First record: female at Tomb of Kings, Paphos, on 16th & 18th April 1998 (Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957) Ann. Rep. 45: 44).

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET *Psittacula krameri*

UKRAINE First and second records: Chernomorsky Reserve, Herson region, on 31st August 1976, and Zatoka, Odessa region, on 28th August 1998 (cf. first and second Bulgarian records in 1996 and 1998, Brit. Birds 91: 248; 92: 74).

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO *Coccyzus americanus*

AZORES Vagrant: Ilha de S. Miguel, on 23rd October 1996.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

NETHERLANDS Increase: 1,368 breeding pairs in 1996 (30-40% more than in 1995).

EURASIAN SCOPS OWL *Otus scops*

CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding records: pair reared four young in Protection Area Bílé Karpaty mountains, southern Moravia, in 1998; also, female with 5-mm eggs in oviduct killed by car near Přerov, central Moravia.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

CROATIA Range extension: first breeding in northern Croatia, two pairs breeding (one nest found with two live and four dead nestlings and one unhatched egg) near Bratina, Pisarovina, on 5th May 1998 (species is irregular breeder in easternmost Croatia).
IRELAND First breeding record in Northern Ireland: Co. Antrim in 1997.

RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

FRANCE First twentieth-century record: male found dead at Barbegal, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 12th June 1997 (Ornithos 5: 166).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK *Chordeiles minor*

FRANCE First record: Ouessant, Finistère, on 17th-28th September 1998*.

ALPINE SWIFT *Tachymarptis melba*

HUNGARY First record and amendment: found in weakened state on 1st April 1996 (not 2nd April 1996 as given Brit. Birds 90: 88; Túzok 3: 50), taken into care and released on 6th April.

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

BELGIUM First record: Lierre on 30th April 1995 (Aves 34: 207).

HUNGARY First record: 22nd May 1996 (Brit. Birds 90: 88; Túzok 3: 50).

LITTLE SWIFT *Apus affinis*

AZORES First record: captured and photographed aboard a boat in Azorean waters on 23rd March 1996.

PORTUGAL Vagrant: Cruzinha, Alvor, on 9th June 1996.

BELTED KINGFISHER *Ceryle alcyon*

AZORES Second record: male at Ponta da Caldeira, Ilha de S. Jorge, on 21st October 1996.

BLUE-CHEEKED BEE-EATER *Merops superciliosus*

FRANCE Vagrant: Capitello, Corse-du-Sud, on 17th-18th September 1998*.

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

DENMARK Irregular breeder: about four breeding pairs at Røsnæs, Zealand, during summer 1998.

LATVIA Fourth record: 13th May 1998 (report on 1st August 1993, Brit. Birds 87: 7, was not accepted).

SYRIAN WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos syriacus*

SLOVENIA First pair confirmed breeding: Malčnik, near Maribor, in May 1997 (first record in 1974, breeding by mixed pair of male Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major* and female Syrian in 1978; *Acrocephalus* 89: 94-95).

MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER***Dendrocopos medius***

ESTONIA Additions and amendments: two records from nineteenth century now accepted as first and second records; so former first record, on 13th October 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 232), becomes third; new fourth record: 2nd-3rd September 1993, so former second record, 14th June 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 75), becomes fifth.

NETHERLANDS Continued increase: from 1st January 1999, removed from the list of species considered by the Dutch Rarities Committee (CDNA).

HOOPOE LARK *Alaemon alaudipes*

CANARY ISLANDS First accepted record: 21st February 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 50; *La Garcilla* 102: 23).

BIMACULATED LARK *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

SWEDEN Third record: 27th-29th May 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 141).

WHITE-WINGED LARK *Melanocorypha leucoptera*

BULGARIA First dated record: one at Kamen Briag, Dobrich Region, on 16th February 1997.

SKY LARK *Alauda arvensis*

GREAT BRITAIN New population estimate: a randomised census in 1997 estimated the British population at 1,160,000 pairs (*BTO News* 218: 14-15).

HORNED LARK *Eremophila alpestris*

GREAT BRITAIN Influx: co-ordinated count in coastal Norfolk on 5th December 1998 produced total of 591, about double the expected national wintering population (*Norfolk Bird Club Bull.* 32: 4-8), and more than usual were also seen elsewhere at this time.

SLOVENIA First record: three near Medvode on 23rd September 1994 (*Acrocephalus* 92: 3-5).

PLAIN MARTIN *Riparia paludicola*

FRANCE First record: Mas de la Forgette/Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 25th September

1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 166; *Brit. Birds* 91: 249), not 25th October 1997 as reported subsequently (*Ornithos* 5: 149; *Brit. Birds* 92: 76).

CRAG MARTIN *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

SWEDEN First record: 19th-22nd October 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 141-142, 152-153).

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

ICELAND Breeding: highest-ever numbers and six breeding records in 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 29-30).

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

BELGIUM Fifth record: 17th September 1993 (*Aves* 34: 208).

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

BELGIUM Vagrants: 15 records involving 22 individuals in 1995 (188 previous records, involving 228 individuals; *Aves* 34: 208-209). **CANARY ISLANDS** Second record: Tenerife in November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 274) now accepted.

FRANCE Vagrants: eight records involving 15 individuals in 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 166-167). Wintering: four in Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, and two or three at La Tranche-sur-Mer, Vendée, in January 1999*.

SWEDEN Vagrants: about 40 in 1996 (355 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 103-104), about 50 in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 122) and minor invasion of over 60 in September 1998.

BLYTH'S PIPIT *Anthus godlewskii*

DENMARK First record: first-winter at Vaernengene, W-Jutland, from 22nd November to 1st December 1998*.

FINLAND Vagrant: Hanko on 4th-8th November 1998 (11 previous records).

FRANCE Second and third records: Crau, Bouches-du-Rhône, in February 1998 (plates 83 & 84), and Sein, Finistère, on 18th-20th October 1998*.

ISRAEL Second record: 24th September 1998 (first was in November 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 335).



83 & 84. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, France, 14th February 1998 (Thierry Fournet)



SWEDEN First record: Visby, Gotland, on 18th-21st November 1998*.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni*

FINLAND Vagrants: 11th October 1996, 14th October 1996 and 3rd November 1996 (21 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 24).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 16th-17th September 1996, 9th October 1996 and 18th-19th October 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 143).

SWITZERLAND Second record: showing characters of race *yunnanensis*, at Col de Bretolet/Champéry on 2nd October 1998 (first was in December 1995, *Brit. Birds* 90: 245; *Orn. Beob.* 93: 338).

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

LITHUANIA Third record: 24th November 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 74).

BUFF-BELLIED PIPIT *Anthus rubescens*

SWEDEN First record: Träslövsläge, Skåne, from 29th December 1996 to 14th January 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 161-162).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

DENMARK Fourth record of race *feldegg*: 12th-13th May 1997 (*DOFT* 92: 262).

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*

BULGARIA Fourth to eighth records: male at Shabla Lake, Dobrich Region, on 12th April 1996, two males and two females at same place on 13th April 1996, two males at Durankulak Lake, Dobrich Region, on 14th April 1996, male at Yatata Marsh, Varna Region, on 10th April 1997, and male at Durankulak Lake on 3rd May 1998.

PORTUGAL First record: Lagoa de Santo André on 6th September 1996.

SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: 20 records in 1996 (110 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 143-144).

SWITZERLAND Fifth and sixth records, including first breeding record: 9th May 1997 and pair during 11th June to 26th July (Brit. Birds 91: 250; Nos Oiseaux 45: 219-220, 237-239; Orn. Beob. 95: 273-274).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*

ICELAND Big influx: nearly 300 reported in winter 1995/96, with peak in early February 1996 ('only' about 1,100 reported before; Bliki 19: 31-32).

NETHERLANDS Irruption in 1995/96: peak numbers were in mid February 1996; estimated to involve 8,000-10,000 individuals; mean flock size 15, maximum 150 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 206-216).

SIBERIAN ACCENTOR *Prunella montanella*

BELARUS First record: mist-netted near Minsk in second half of October 1997.

FINLAND Fifth record: Kerava, near Helsinki, from 6th December 1998 to at least mid February 1999.

RED-FLANKED BLUETAIL *Tarsiger cyanurus*

DENMARK Fifth record: 28th September 1997 (DOFT 92: 263).

SWEDEN Highest-ever annual total: three records involving seven individuals in 1996, one pair breeding (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 144-145).

DAURIAN REDSTART *Phoenicurus auroreus*

SWEDEN First record (vagrant/escape): 22nd-26th September 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 168).

COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

BELGIUM Second and third records of race *maura*: 24th April 1995 and 18th October 1995 (*Aves* 34: 209).

DENMARK Vagrant of race *maura/stejnegeri*: 23rd April 1996 (26 previously accepted records; DOFT 92: 263).

FRANCE Vagrant of race *maura/stejnegeri*: 4th November 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 167).

SWEDEN Vagrants of race *maura/stejnegeri*: four records in 1996 and three in 1997 (107 previous records, involving 114 individuals; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 145; 30: 163-164).

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*

FINLAND Vagrant: 30th April to 12th May 1996 (six previous records; Linnut 32: 25).

FRANCE Vagrant: 25th October 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 167).

PIED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe pleschanka*

FINLAND Vagrant: 3rd October 1996 (15 previous records; Linnut 32: 25).

FRANCE Second record: Hable d'Ault, Somme, on 6th October 1998*.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 15th October 1996, 20th-22nd November 1996, 25th-29th October 1997 and 8th November 1997 (14 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 145; 30: 164).

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*

DENMARK Correction: owing to an error in DOFT (92: 263), the records in November 1995 and March 1997, listed in *British Birds* (92: 77), should be deleted: they related to Desert Wheatear *O. deserti*.

IRELAND Fourth record: Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, on 22nd May 1997.

SWEDEN Fifth record: 8th-13th November 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 145).

SWITZERLAND Second record of race *melanoleuca*: singing male on 26th-27th April 1997 (Nos Oiseaux 45: 220-221; Orn. Beob. 95: 274).

DESERT WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti*

FINLAND Vagrant: Kirkkonummi, near Helsinki, during 5th-9th November 1998 (eight previous records).

FRANCE Vagrants: 20th May 1997 and influx of eight during 26th October to 27th December 1997, three staying into 1998 (nine in one year is the most ever; *Ornithos* 5: 168).

IRELAND Fourth record: Rosslare Harbour, Co. Wexford, during 2nd-15th December 1997.

WHITE'S THRUSH *Zoothera dauma*

FRANCE Vagrant: Ouessant on 19th October 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 168).

SWAINSON'S THRUSH *Catharus ustulatus*

ICELAND Third record: 9th October 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 33).

EYEBROWED THRUSH *Turdus obscurus*

BELGIUM Vagrant: 29th November 1995 (seven previous records; *Aves* 34: 210).

DUSKY THRUSH *Turdus naumanni*

SWEDEN First record: adult of nominate race on 27th October 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 146, 153), not 17th October 1996 as notified previously (*Brit. Birds* 90: 246).

DARK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus ruficollis*

FRANCE Vagrant of black-throated race *atroregularis*: 16th May 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 168).

CETTI'S WARBLER *Cettia cetti*

HUNGARY First record and amendment: 25th-26th October 1996 (not just 25th October 1996 as given *Brit. Birds* 91: 52; *Túzok* 3: 50).

PALLAS'S GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella certhiola*

FRANCE Second record: Ouessant on 10th-15th October 1998* (first was also on Ouessant, on 31st August 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 337).

SWEDEN First record: Segerstad, Öland, on 14th September 1998*.

RIVER WARBLER *Locustella fluviatilis*

SWEDEN Count: about 200 singing males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 126).

AQUATIC WARBLER *Acrocephalus paludicola*

BELARUS Census: 7,300-13,000 singing males in May-July 1998 (cf. previous estimate of 6,700-9,700 pairs, *Brit. Birds* 90: 246).

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

ICELAND Fifth and sixth records: 31st May 1996 and 21st-22nd September 1996 (the first since 1964; *Bliki* 19: 34).

PADDYFIELD WARBLER *Acrocephalus agricola*

HUNGARY Fifth record: Sumony fishponds on 6th August 1998*.

LITHUANIA First record: trapped at Ventes ragas bird-ringing station on 8th September 1996 (*Ciconia* 5: 74).

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

MALTA Third record: ringed in October 1998 (first and second were in October 1990 and August 1992, *Brit. Birds* 84: 234; 86: 44).

NETHERLANDS First breeding record: Nieuwegein, Utrecht, during June-July 1998, male probably paired with Marsh Warbler *A. palustris* reared two young.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*

FAROE ISLANDS Third record: ringed on Nólsoy on 31st August 1998*.

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

SWEDEN Count: about 425 singing males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 126).

OLIVACEOUS WARBLER *Hippolais pallida*

SWEDEN Second record: 6th July 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 164).

BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*

SWEDEN Vagrant: 13th-22nd June 1997 (five previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 165).

MARMORA'S WARBLER *Sylvia sarda*

FRANCE Influx of vagrants (outside Corsica): 11 records involving ten individuals in April-June 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 169); this information replaces that given previously (*Brit. Birds* 89: 40).

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

ANDORRA Wintering at high altitude: singing birds repeatedly seen at over 2,000 m.

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

ICELAND Second record: 29th September to 1st October 1996 (note date amendment to *Brit. Birds* 90: 247; *Bliki* 19: 34).

SWITZERLAND First and second breeding records: singing male on 15th May 1996, female on 26th May and nest with four recently hatched nestlings found on 18th June at Follatères Fully, Valais, and second breeding pair at Loèche, Valais, (*Nos Oiseaux* 45: 227-236; cf. *Brit. Birds* 91: 52; *Orn. Beob.* 94: 201-202). First autumn record: 14th-15th October 1998.

MÉNÉTRIES'S WARBLER *Sylvia mystacea*

CYPRUS First record: male at Paphos Lighthouse on 2nd May 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 62).

SARDINIAN WARBLER *Sylvia melanocephala*

BELGIUM Second record: 21st September to 14th October 1995 (*Aves* 34: 210-211).

DENMARK Fifth record: female ringed at Møn Fyr, Møn, on 9th October 1998*.

GREENISH WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

BELGIUM Third record: 19th September 1993 (first was on 1st September 1987, not 11th September 1988 as published previously, *Brit. Birds* 82: 351; second was on 18th September 1988; previously accepted record in October 1975, *Brit. Birds* 73: 577, is now rejected; *Aves* 26: 11; 27: 23; 34: 211).

GREECE First record: first-winter of race *nitidus* on Antikythyra Island on 18th September 1998.

SWEDEN Count: about 107 singing males in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 126-128).

ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*

BELGIUM First record: Zeebrugge on 6th-8th September 1995 (*Aves* 34: 211).

DENMARK Third record: Blåvands Huk, W-Jutland, on 28th September 1998*.

ICELAND First record: 22nd September 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 35).

PALLAS'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus proregulus*

BELGIUM Vagrants: four in October-November 1995 (33 previous records; *Aves* 34: 212).

FRANCE Vagrants: Camargue on 26th April 1997, and seven records involving eight individuals in October 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 172).

LATVIA Vagrants: 25th October 1998 and 27th October 1998.

SWEDEN Vagrants: about 280 in 1996 and 66 in 1997 (402 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 110; 30: 128-129).

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Vagrant: 23rd October 1997 (*Soc. Jersiaise Ann. Bull.* 1998: 204).

CYPRUS Vagrant: 21st February 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 64).

FRANCE Vagrants: 25 records involving 29 individuals in 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 172).

ICELAND Vagrant: seven records in 1996 (one of the pre-1979 records is no longer accepted, so there are now 51 previous records; *Bliki* 19: 35).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 55 in 1996 and 24 in 1997 (526 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 110-111; 30: 129).

HUME'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus humei*

BELGIUM Vagrants: 18th October 1981, 14th November 1985, 28th December 1988 and 12th November 1994 (there are now six accepted records; *Aves* 34: 212).

FINLAND Vagrants: 27th November 1974 and 16th October 1991 (eight previously accepted records; *Linnut* 32: 26).

SWEDEN Vagrants: five in October 1996 and one in November 1997 (13 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 146-147; 30: 165).

RADDE'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

BELGIUM Vagrant: 4th-5th November 1995 (six previous records; *Aves* 34: 212).

FRANCE Vagrant: 23rd October 1997 (six previous records; *Ornithos* 5: 172).

SWEDEN Vagrants: 26th September 1996, 14th October 1996, 7th October 1997 and 9th October 1997 (32 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 147; 30: 165).

DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

BELGIUM Vagrant: 20th September 1995 (11 previous records; *Aves* 34: 212).

ESTONIA Fourth record: 30th October 1995 (former fourth record, 1st November 1996, *Brit. Birds* 91: 53, becomes fifth).

FINLAND Vagrant: 10th October 1995 (43 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 26).

FRANCE Vagrants: 21st November 1996 (*Ornithos* 5: 172) and Ouessant on 8th October 1998* (14 previous records).

SWEDEN Vagrants: five during 15th-25th October 1996 and one on 12th October 1997 (32 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 147; 30: 165).

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

FINLAND Vagrants of race *tristis*: two on 23rd September 1996, and 12th October 1996 (57 previous records; *Linnut* 32: 26).

SWEDEN Vagrants of race *tristis*: 13th October 1996, 23rd October 1996, 27th October 1996, 11th October 1997 and 18th October 1997 (87 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 147; 30: 165).

MOUNTAIN CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus sindianus*

ISRAEL Second record: Lotan, Arava Valley, on 31st October 1998 (first was on 5th March 1983).

SEMI-COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula semitorquata*

CYPRUS First autumn record: first-winter on 12th September 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957) Ann. Rep.* 45: 65).

AZURE TIT *Parus cyanus*

SWEDEN Third record: 12th February to 6th April 1996 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 147-148), not 12th March to 7th April 1996 as notified previously (*Brit. Birds* 90: 91).

WALLCREEPER *Tichodroma muraria*

ANDORRA First probable breeding record: pair carrying food to rock crevice at 2,500 m on 17th July 1998 (only four previous breeding-season records).

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

NETHERLANDS Increase: 204 breeding pairs counted in 1996, of which 75% at Bargerveen, Drenthe (cf. 151 pairs in 1994, *Brit. Birds* 88: 278).

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*

NETHERLANDS Decrease: only one breeding pair found in 1996 (cf. decreases in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 77: 242; 83: 16; 87: 12-13).

SOUTHERN GREY SHRIKE *Lanius meridionalis*

CYPRUS Second record and first of race *pallidirostris*: first-winter from 20th November to 4th December 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc. (1957) Ann. Rep.* 45: 68).

SWEDEN First record of race *pallidirostris*: 4th June 1985 (record previously listed as first, in August-September 1995, *Brit. Birds* 90: 248-249, becomes second; treated as race of Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor*; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 25: 141; 30: 166).

NUTCRAKER *Nucifraga caryocatactes*

LATVIA Irruption of slender-billed race *macrorhynchos*: large numbers in autumn 1998, when over 2,000 passed through Pape alone (previous irruption was in 1995).

EURASIAN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

CANARY ISLANDS Second record (vagrant or escape): Tenerife on 10th January 1998* (first was in February 1830).

IRELAND First record of eastern race *monedula/soemmerringii*: Lucan, Co. Dublin, during 25th February to 18th April 1997.

HOUSE CROW *Corvus splendens*

NETHERLANDS Second breeding record: one fledged young at Hoek van Holland, Zuid-Holland, first seen on 9th July 1998 (parents present since April 1994; last year's single young also remaining there). Sixth record: adult, Kollumerland, Lauwersmeer, Friesland, on 15th August 1998 and, probably same individual, Winsum, Groningen, on 20th September 1998.

COMMON RAVEN *Corvus corax*

CANARY ISLANDS Alarming decline on Tenerife: census in spring 1998 produced total of 24 individuals, with minimum of nine pairs (cf. 70-80 pairs in 1987 and 11-16 pairs in 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 251).

NETHERLANDS Increase: 98 pairs in 1995 and 108 pairs in 1996 (cf. re-establishment produced 50 breeding pairs and 31 additional territorial pairs by 1992, *Brit. Birds* 87: 23).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

CANARY ISLANDS First presence and breeding record: at least 20 pairs nesting on Gran Canaria in March 1998 (not 1988 as given incorrectly, *Brit. Birds* 92: 81).

SPANISH SPARROW *Passer hispaniolensis*

FINLAND First record: 31st May 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 54; *Linnut* 32: 28).

RED-EYED VIREO *Vireo olivaceus*

ICELAND Vagrants: 29th-30th September 1996 and 6th October 1996 (ten previous records; *Bliki* 19: 38).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

FAROE ISLANDS Second record: Sudhuroy during 5th-10th May 1998* (first was in October 1993, *Brit. Birds* 87: 324).

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

FAROE ISLANDS Fourth record: Eysturoy on 19th April 1998 (previous three were on 20th April 1904, 18th July 1961 and 11th October 1982; note that last of these was the third record, not the second or first, cf. *Brit. Birds* 73: 578; 76: 570; 77: 242).

YEMEN LINNET *Carduelis yemenensis*

CYPRUS Presumed escape: Mandria, Paphos, on 22nd April 1998 (*Cyprus Orn. Soc.* (1957) *Ann. Rep.* 45: 74).

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL *Loxia**leucoptera*

NETHERLANDS Invasion: total from August 1997 to May 1998 now at least 181 individuals (some still present in late July in Friesland; cf. *Brit. Birds* 92: 81).

SWEDEN High numbers: about 1,100 in 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 135-136).

PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

BELGIUM Third breeding record: pair reared four young in February-May 1995 (*Aves* 34: 214).

PINE GROSBEAK *Pinicola enucleator*

DENMARK Record numbers: largest influx ever recorded, with more than 75 individuals during winter 1998/99*; most (73) were at Skagen, N-Jutland, during 8th-24th November 1998*.

LATVIA Signs of irruption: two, on 10th November 1998 and 12th November 1998 (last irruption was in 1976).

SWEDEN Major irruption: especially in southern Sweden from October 1998 onwards, including flocks of 134 at Ladholmen, Värmland, on 28th October and 150 at Västerås, Västmanland, on 27th December.

LONG-TAILED ROSEFINCH *Uragus**sibiricus*

SWEDEN Second record (vagrant/escape): 4th-11th October 1997 (first was in May 1992, *Brit. Birds* 88: 279; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 168).

YELLOW WARBLER *Dendroica petechia*

ICELAND First record: 5th October 1996 (*Bliki* 19: 39).

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER *Dendroica**coronata*

ICELAND Vagrants: 16th October 1996 and 19th October 1996 (nine previous records; *Bliki* 19: 40).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH *Seiurus motacilla*

CANARY ISLANDS First record: Tazacorte, La Palma, on 10th-26th November 1991, previously published as Northern/Louisiana Waterthrush *S. noveboracensis/motacilla* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 279), now accepted as Louisiana Waterthrush (*La Garcilla* 102: 28).

PINE BUNTING *Emberiza leucocephalos*

FRANCE Wintering; eight together (five males and three females) in Camargue from 31st January to 14th February 1997 (*Ornithos* 5: 175; this information partly replaces that published earlier, *Brit. Birds* 90: 250); male and female in Camargue intermittently during December-January 1998/99*.

SWEDEN Vagrants: 25th-26th January 1996 and 5th-29th October 1997 (11 previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 148; 30: 167).

CIRL BUNTING *Emberiza cirhus*

AUSTRIA Small influx: three singing males, at three sites in eastern Austria, in 1998.

ROCK BUNTING *Emberiza cia*

SWEDEN Fifth record: 7th-11th May 1997 (*Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 30: 167).

GREY-NECKED BUNTING *Emberiza buchanani*

UKRAINE First record: Zmeiny island in northwestern Black Sea on 25th May 1983.

YELLOW-THROATED BUNTING *Emberiza elegans*

SWEDEN Escape/vagrant: male at Hano on

27th April to 1st May 1996 (no previous records; *Vår Fågelvärld Suppl.* 27: 149).

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

ICELAND Fourth record: 28th-29th May 1995 (*Bliki* 19: 40).

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*

LITHUANIA First and second records: 4th October 1996 and 24th April 1997 (*Ciconia* 5: 74; 6: 67).

RED-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza bruniceps*

FINLAND First and second records (both presumed escapes): 26th-27th May 1996 and 7th June to 5th July 1996 (*Linnut* 32: 29).

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENTS

ANDORRA Jacqueline Crozier; AUSTRIA Hans-Martin Berg; BELARUS Dr Mikhael E. Nikiforov; BELGIUM René-Marie Lafontaine; BULGARIA Dr Petar Iankov; CANARY ISLANDS Juan Antonio Lorenzo; CROATIA Jelena Kralj; CHANNEL ISLANDS Ian Buxton; CYPRUS A. E. Sadler; CZECH REPUBLIC Prof. Karel Štátný; DENMARK Brian Rasmussen; ESTONIA Dr Vilju Lilleleht; FAROE ISLANDS Søren Sørensen; FINLAND Tom Lindroos; FRANCE Dr Philippe J. Dubois; GERMANY Peter H. Barthel; GREAT BRITAIN John Marchant; GREECE George I. Handrinos; HUNGARY Dr Gábor Magyar; ICELAND Gunnlaugur Pétursson; IRELAND Paul Milne; ISRAEL Hadoram Shirihi; ITALY Marco Gustin; LATVIA Dr Jānis Baumanis; LITHUANIA Dr Petras Kurlavicius; LUXEMBOURG Tom Conzemius; MALTA Joe Sultana; MOROCCO Dr Michel Thévenot; NETHERLANDS Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg; POLAND Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk; PORTUGAL Dr João Carlos Farinha; SLOVENIA Iztok Geister; SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana; SWEDEN Tommy Tyrberg; SWITZERLAND Dr N. Zbinden; UKRAINE Dr Igor Gorbañ.

REQUEST: SWIFT AND HIRUNDINE CORPSES

Anyone who finds the corpse of an adult swift (Apodidae) or hirundine (Hirundinidae) in the UK this summer is requested to send it to the address below. The corpses will be analysed for stable isotope signatures in an attempt to discover the habitat types used by the birds on their wintering grounds (mainly in Africa).

Along with the corpse, please send details of when and where it was found,

and the suspected cause of death, to Dr Richard Bradbury, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Zoology Department, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS. Corpses should be sent by First Class mail, in a sealed plastic bag enclosed in a jiffy bag or study box with padding. Receipt of specimens will be acknowledged and postage will be refunded to the sender.

BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1999

Many of the photographers entering this competition will be well known by name to readers, as their work is regularly seen in bird books and popular magazines. The fact that the top photographers enter is a sign of the prestigious status of this annual competition, now in its twenty-third year.

The judging process was explained in detail last year (*Brit. Birds* 91: 219). After the second viewing of the transparencies, we reduced the selection to a short-list of 37 slides. Several photographers had all three of their entries still in contention at this stage: Dr Jens Eriksen, Tony Hamblin, Mike Lane, Wayne Richardson and Steve Young. The next viewing had

us struggling to agree on a final 20 photographs. At this stage, Mike Lane was the only photographer with all three shots still in the running; Tony Hamblin still had two.

The final short-listed photographs were then projected, and finally critically examined on the light box. The judges independently and secretly placed them in order from 1 to 20. All the scores were added to reveal the winners. Of the top 20 photographs, 18 showed interesting aspects of the bird's behaviour. Potential winners must submit images that are beautiful, perfectly exposed, crisp, show good composition and also depict an interesting aspect of behaviour. A tall order!

1st	Little Owls <i>Athene noctua</i>	Tony Hamblin
2nd	Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Mike Lane
3rd	Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Edmund Fellowes
4th	Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Alan Petty
5th	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>	Tony Hamblin
6th	European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	Dr Jens Eriksen
7th	Wilson's Storm-petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	Axel Halley
8th	Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Wayne Richardson
9th =	Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	Reston Kilgour
9th =	Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Mike Lane
11th =	Booted Eagle <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	Roger Tidman
11th =	Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Roy Glen
11th =	Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	Gordon Langsbury
14th	Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Hans Schouten
15th	Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Mike Lane
16th =	Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Richard Price
16th =	Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Steve Young
18th	Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Ray Tipper
19th	Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	Gary Smith
20th	Mute Swans <i>Cygnus olor</i>	David Norton

Other photographers whose work was initially short-listed were: Tony Clarke, Bob Glover and George Higginbotham.



85. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1999: Little Owls *Athene noctua*, Warwickshire, May 1998 (Canon T90; Canon 500L 4.5 lens; 1/60, f4.5; Fuji Sensia 100 uprated to 200ASA) (Tony Hamblin)

All 20 photographers whose work was short-listed will be invited to the Press Reception at The Mall Galleries at which the prizes will be presented. This year's winner will receive a complete set of the magnificent *Handbook of the Birds of the World* published by Lynx Edicions.

Tony Hamblin, as well as being the winner, had a second photograph in the top five. The consistency of a master! It was agreed by all the judges that Tony Hamblin's winning shot of two Little Owls 'head-butting' (plate 85) showed a remarkable and rarely observed part of their bonding behaviour.

Tony Hamblin describes the scene: 'In May 1998, this pair of Little Owls was nesting under a corrugated metal roof of some out-buildings. I placed an old tree branch across the top of an unphotogenic chicken-wire fence (erected to stop Rabbits from entering) in the hope that the birds would use it.

'I sat for two evenings, observing from a hide placed some 10 m away. The off-duty bird used the perch frequently, but generally the owls flew directly to the nest under the

roof. Portraits were obtained, but, suddenly late one evening, another Little Owl came into the next field, calling.

"My" pair emerged from the nest site and flew to a nearby tree, calling frantically. Then, to my surprise, they returned to the perch that I had erected and, with much activity, bonded with wing-flapping and facial contact. They kept this up for at least eight minutes with me exposing a couple of rolls of film. This shot shows one bird digging its bill solidly into the branch whilst the other pushes vigorously against its partner. After this, they fell to the ground and continued this amazing behaviour with vehemence for some time before they returned to the nest site. The late-evening light, luckily, was dull, so has not given a colour cast, although many of my transparencies showed movement.'

In second place, Mike Lane's Temminck's Stint in display flight (plate 86) is a truly beautiful photograph. The out-of-focus background complements the plumage tones of the bird. The display flight of this tiny wader is reminiscent of

that of the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*. To get such a perfect shot of this behaviour is most impressive. Note that Mike, winner of this title in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 326), had all three of his entries in the top 15 photographs in the final short-list.

In third place, Edmund Fellowes' photograph of a Peregrine Falcon grooming its neck feathers (plate 87) is another remarkable action shot. This photograph was taken from a hide set up next to a regular loafing tree. The out-of-focus background and position of the branch and trunk highlight the bird. A truly memorable photograph, by another former winner of this competition, in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 222-227).

Alan Petty's Greenfinch (plate 88) is combing its upperwing with its foot. The topic of 'comfort behaviour' occupies no fewer than four pages in *A Dictionary of Birds* (Campbell & Lack 1985), with 'scratch-preening' or 'extended scratching' being an important part of feather maintenance. Alan Petty's photograph illustrates this action and, again, the background highlights the bird.

Tony Hamblin's photograph of a singing Goldcrest (plate 89) was praised for its excellent composition. Tony had erected a 4-m scaffold from which to photograph the male Goldcrest and 'after a long wait, he emerged to sing where I could photograph him.'

Dr Jens Eriksen's European Bee-eater (plate 90) is another crisp, well-lit, beautiful shot. Surely this is one of the most photogenic of all birds?

Axel Halley's photograph of a Wilson's Storm-petrel over the 'liquid' ocean (plate 91) is also movingly beautiful. The fantastic reflection was noted by all the judges. The photo was taken from a small boat off Portugal; the transparency reveals the storm-petrel's diagnostic yellow webs between its toes, which we hope will still be visible in this printed version.

Wayne Richardson's photograph of a Common Kestrel (plate 92) shows a rarely caught bit of action: the moment when the bird changes from hovering to stooping on its prey.

The 'British Birds' Young Photographer of the Year Award, presented by The Eric



86. SECOND PRIZE: Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Norway, June 1998 (Canon EOS5; Canon 600 lens + 1.4x converter; 1/350, f5.6; Fuji Sensia 100 uprated one stop) (Mike Lane)



87. THIRD PRIZE: Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Dumfries & Galloway, May 1998 (Canon EOS5; Canon 300 lens + 2x converter; 1/60, f5.6; Fuji Sensia 100ASA) (Edmund Fellowes)

Hosking Trust, was for the third time in a row won by David Norton. This time he has won this under-26 award with a photograph of two male Mute Swans fighting (plate 93). The sheer aggressiveness of these males is depicted well. We receive disappointingly few entries in this section, so any budding bird-photographers who will be under 26 years old in mid January 2000 are urged to submit entries for next year's competition. The prize comprises a cheque for £100, a selection of bird books and a superb

engraved goblet.

As in other recent years, the monthly magazine *Bird Watching* will publish the winning photograph and a selection of other short-listed entries in a forthcoming issue. We were sorry that its Editor, David Cromack, was unable to join us on the judging panel, but hope that this will prove possible next year.

Robin Chittenden, David Hosking and J. T. R. Sharrock, *clo Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ*



88. FOURTH: Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Kent, August 1998 (Nikon F90X; Nikon 300 lens f2.8 A.F.S. + 2x converter; 1/320, f5.6; Fuji Velvia rated at 80ASA) (Alan Petty)



89. FIFTH: Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Warwickshire, May 1998 (Canon EOS/N; Canon 300L f4 lens; 1/125, f8; Fuji Sensia 100ASA) (Tony Hamblin)



Facing page, top: 90. SIXTH: European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Oman, April 1998 (Nikon F5; Nikkor 300/AF-S 1:2.8D lens + 1.4x converter; 1/800, f4; Fuji Provia 100ASA) (*Jens Eriksen*)

Facing page, bottom: 91. SEVENTH: Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, off Portugal, September 1998 (Nikon F90, Novoflex 400 lens; 1/250, f5.6; Kodachrome 64) (*Axel Halley*)



92. EIGHTH: Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Cleveland, April 1998 (Nikon F80; Sigma 400 APO lens; 1/1,000, f5.6; Fuji Sensia 100ASA) (*Wayne Richardson*)



93. Winner of THE 'BRITISH BIRDS' YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR: Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*, Essex, April 1998 (Nikon F-801s; 105 Micro-Nikkor lens; 1/1,000, f4; Fuji Sensia 100ASA) (*David Norton*)

COMPARISON OF SHORT-TOED AND LESSER SHORT-TOED LARKS

PETER LANSDOWN

The breeding ranges of Europe's two small larks, Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Lesser Short-toed Lark *C. rufescens*, overlap in three continents. Both species nest in Spain, from Morocco across North Africa to Libya, and from Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Israel eastwards to Central Asia. In Europe and North Africa, Short-toed Lark is almost exclusively a summer visitor, while Lesser Short-toed Lark is resident or locally dispersive. This difference in seasonal distribution is reflected in the status of the two larks in Britain, where more than 600 Short-toed Larks have been recorded, compared with just one Lesser Short-toed Lark, which appeared at Portland Bill, Dorset, on 2nd May 1992.

In the Western Palearctic, there is a wide

variation in markings and, especially, colour amongst the seven races of Short-toed Lark and the nine races of Lesser Short-toed Lark. Even within the same race, individuals vary in appearance owing to the effects of bleaching by the sun and the state of feather wear. Not surprisingly, therefore, structure provides two of the prime characters for separation.

The bill of Short-toed Lark is somewhat larger, longer, more evenly tapering and thus more sharply pointed than the more appealing, stubbier, chick-like bill of Lesser Short-toed Lark, some eastern races of which do, however, have longer, more conical bills. The tertials of Short-toed Lark usually cover all but about 2 mm of the length of the primaries, leaving exposed only one tip or two tips extremely



94. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Israel, March 1993 (George Reszeter)



95. Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Portugal, April 1996 (Ray Tipper)



96. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Mallorca, May 1992 (George Reszeter)



97. Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Morocco, February 1994 (John Harriman)

close-together, while the primaries of Lesser Short-toed Lark project prominently beyond the tertials, by about 12 mm, with three, or sometimes four, well-spaced tips visible. This important difference shows to advantage in plates 94 and 95. A Short-toed Lark with heavily worn, partly grown, broken or missing tertials obviously possesses a longer primary projection than usual. Though this presents an identification pitfall, it can be overcome by attention to the condition, number and spacing of the tertials. While the head-shape of both larks varies with posture, that of Lesser Short-toed Lark is often more domed and this, together with the species' smaller bill and its shorter wings, tail and legs, gives Lesser Short-toed Lark a neater, more compact appearance.

The hard, dry, trilling 'chirrup' or 'trip-chip' call of Short-toed Lark is quite different from the longer, louder, rapid, buzzing 'dzrdzrdzrdzr' or 'chrrt-chrrt' call of Lesser Short-toed Lark. Short-toed Lark's song, which is given in undulating flight, is simple, though variable, and frequently includes short, melodic trills that descend in pitch. Lesser Short-toed Lark's song, which is delivered either in slow, steady, circling flight or from the ground, is similarly musical, but is noticeably longer

in duration, faster and both more complex and more random.

The breast-pattern, notwithstanding its variation on both larks, is normally the most useful plumage feature for distinguishing between the two. Short-toed Lark's breast can be unmarked but, more often, there are a few indistinct flecks, or some thin streaks, or two dark upper-breast-side patches. The streaking may form a shallow band across the extreme upper breast, with the streaks most distinct at the breast-sides, or may be confined to the sides of the upper breast. The rather variable patches, which are most obvious in spring and which are frequently supplemented by a little faint streaking, are at the junction of the sides of the neck and the sides of the upper breast. Lesser Short-toed Lark's breast is typically very different, with delicate, close-spaced, organised-looking streaking for the full width of the breast, and often on the upper flanks, forming a distinct, relatively deep pectoral band, which is a little less pronounced centrally. Some individuals also have a few faint streaks on the throat, while the streaking of others extends, albeit finely, onto the lower flanks. Some paler races of Lesser Short-toed Lark are less well marked below, but still show a full breast band. Only on particularly heavily streaked

individuals does the streaking merge at the sides of the breast to form diffuse, dark patches.

The head-pattern of both larks is variable, but each has its own distinctive set of characters. Short-toed Lark has the more contrasting head-pattern: the forehead is sometimes unmarked, or only very lightly streaked; the crown of some individuals is rufous; the supercilium is broad and white or cream-coloured; the pale ring around the eye is often broken and is rarely conspicuous; the dark eye-stripe behind the eye is quite thick and prominent; the ear-coverts are fairly plain; and the malar stripe is lacking or minimal. Lesser Short-toed Lark has a comparatively unremarkable head-pattern: the forehead is

invariably streaked; the crown is never rufous; the supercilium is dull and inconspicuous; the pale buff ring around the eye is accentuated by a slim, dark lower border; the dark eye-stripe behind the eye is rather weak-looking; the ear-coverts of most individuals are streaked; and the malar stripe is reasonably distinct.

The feathers of the mantle and scapulars of Short-toed Lark have dark centres of varying widths and a mixture of pale and dull fringes, giving the species' upperparts the appearance of being rather diffusely streaked. Lesser Short-toed Lark is superficially similar, but its feathers have dark centres of a more even width and consistently pale fringes, so the streaking is clean-cut and looks comparatively neat and



98. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Spain, June 1994 (Mike Lane)



99. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, south Turkey (George Reszeter)



100. Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Canary Islands, December 1990 (Robin Chittenden)



101. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Mallorca (George Reszeter)



102. Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Portugal, January 1999 (Ray Tipper)

regular. Short-toed Lark frequently shows plain lesser coverts, while those of Lesser Short-toed Lark are usually clearly marked darker, and its primaries display whiter and more distinct pale tips. The combination of the pattern of markings, or lack of markings, on the breast, forehead, ear-coverts, upperparts and lesser coverts of each of the two small larks gives Lesser Short-toed Lark a more evenly streaked general appearance than Short-toed Lark.

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LETTERS

THE CIRL BUNTING IN BRITAIN

I should like to comment on the letters by R. D. Penhallurick and Michael Shrubbs (*Brit. Birds* 91: 146-148, 331-332) concerning the distribution of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* in Britain covered in the paper by Dr Andy Evans (*Brit. Birds* 90: 267-282).

The late Capt. H. A. Gilbert, who did much field ornithology in the upper Wye valley, noticed that, when smallholdings stopped cereal production and went into cattle, their nesting Cirl Buntings disappeared. On the Balearic Islands, this bunting does nest on Mallorca, but is absent from Menorca because there is little arable land there.

Historical climatologists state that the 1730s were hotter than the 1990s, but the rest of the eighteenth century was colder than normal. The best guess is that climate amelioration, plus increasing cereal production with the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, induced the Cirl Bunting's northerly spread from France.

K. W. Brewster
102 Kingsbury Road, Erdington, Birmingham
B24 8QU

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Michael Shrubbs has commented as follows: 'Mr Brewster may well be right, but whatever we surmise outside the established record remains surmise. I would disagree with him for two reasons:

1. As both Williamson (1975) and Burton (1995) made clear, long-term climatic amelioration did not start until about the 1850s. Not only was the second half of the eighteenth century colder than normal, but so also was much of the first half of the nineteenth, particularly between about 1820 and 1840, when the trend in summer weather was indifferent enough to contribute significantly to a severe agricultural recession in England, and winters were often severe, to which many coaching prints of the Regency and early Victorian periods graphically attest. It is difficult to reconcile this with colonisation

by the Cirl Bunting, if the species really was limited by such climatic factors. I doubt that for reasons given in my original letter (*Brit. Birds* 91: 331-332).

2. Why should any expansion of cereal farming in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries be very important in encouraging colonisation by Cirl Buntings? Cereals have always been the most extensive tillage crop, amounting to several millions of acres in the late seventeenth century for example, of which an area of the order of 3 million acres (1.2 million ha) alone was wheat. Thus, cereal habitats were always abundant, and tended to be more widely distributed, particularly in the west, than they are today because farming was less specialised and local communities more self-sufficient.

'Thus, I suspect that the bird was widely overlooked. Surely not a unique case: what about Willow Tit *Parus montanus*?'

Concerning current trends, Dr Andy Evans (verbally) has given us the good news that the latest figure, resulting from a full survey in summer 1998, shows an increase to 453 pairs in Britain.

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MOORHEN FEEDING ON SOFT EXCREMENT OF GULLS

Gareth Watkins' short note on 'Moorhen drinking liquid goose faeces' and the editorial comment (*Brit. Birds* 92: 204) caused me to refer to my own records on that subject (Engler 1973, 1980, 1983).

At Hofgarten, Düsseldorf, Germany, I often observed Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*, adults as well as juveniles, feeding on whitish faeces of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, particularly in autumn.

In order to take up that pasty material, a Moorhen had to bend its head, and turn it sideways until its bill was lying flat on the ground. After feeding on some fresh droppings, the bird walked to the pond, and washed its bill or drank some water.

Helmut Engler

Am Scheidweg 66, D-50765 Köln, Germany

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LOOKING BACK



ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO:

'The following notes were made... in those extensive woods which once formed part of the Forest of Feckenham, Worcestershire... At first I heard nothing more than Thrushes, Blackbirds and Nightingales, except a Nightjar... A Wood-Warbler was singing among the oaks... Coming to the outskirts of the wood, I saw a

Cirl Bunting singing in a little orchard close by. These birds have increased very much the last few years, and breed annually in one or two spots. On the top of an elm a Wryneck was sitting, all huddled up except when he threw his head back and stretched out his neck to utter his curious note.'

(*Zoologist* 3 (fourth series): 259-261, June 1899)





RARITIES COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE SLENDER-BILLED CURLEW RECORD?

The record of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* from Druridge Pools, Northumberland, on 4th-7th May 1998 has aroused a lot of interest both nationally and internationally. Because of this, and because of some of the rumours we all hear, the BBRC wishes to tell everyone of the progress of the record.

The BBRC believes that this is arguably the most important record it has ever dealt with, as not only will we be judging a record of a bird new to Britain, but, when the decision is made, it may well also produce a new set of identification criteria which will be used throughout the species' limited range and may, therefore, have fundamental effects on the conservation of one of the World's most endangered species. Since it is so important, we want not only to cover every angle and to get it right, but also to ensure that it is processed as rapidly as is reasonable.

- Detailed descriptions of the bird took some time to arrive, so the record did not begin circulation until November 1998.
- The first BBRC member on the circulation had to assimilate and rationalise the evidence presented. With eight detailed descriptions as well as photographic and video evidence, it was necessary to examine them in detail, address inconsistencies and concerns and clarify fine points of plumage and structure against known material. The clarification process involved international consultation with appropriate experts and examination of

museum material. All this information was then assimilated and condensed for the benefit of the subsequent voters.

- This analysis took some time and was condensed into a 19-page document, which is currently circulating around the Committee. This process should now be fairly rapid, and we hope that it will have completed its first circulation by the time this announcement goes to press.
- We then hope to clear up any outstanding matters by having this record as an agenda item at the summer meeting of the BBRC.

We are, however, lacking some important information. On 4th-6th May, at least, there was a second small curlew present with the bird submitted as Slender-billed Curlew. It, too, was small, with a small bill (though noticeably larger than that of the original bird). It also had white underparts with black spots, a more prominent head pattern, white underwings and a whitish tail. We have some photographs of this bird and it also appears in at least one of the videos, but some observers seem confidently to have identified it as 'just a small Curlew [*N. arquatus*]'. We urgently request detailed descriptions or photographic evidence of this second bird, and would like to hear from observers what criteria they used to identify it, which will help us to achieve a rapid completion of the assessment.

Please send details by post to Michael J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, Cornwall TR26 3AZ.

COLIN BRADSHAW

NEWS AND COMMENT

COMPILED BY WENDY DICKSON AND BOB SCOTT

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*.

Garden Birds Monitored

At the turn of the year, the BTO registered its 10,000th volunteer to take part in Garden BirdWatch, in which observers note the common birds visiting their gardens each week throughout the year. From these records, the data can be analysed to show how Britain's garden birds are changing. Andrew Cannon, the survey organiser, thought that it would be six or seven years before any trends could be detected from records of garden birds, but the first four years have already shown a number of fascinating changes. For instance, 25% more gardens than three years ago no longer get House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, mirroring this species' decline to which we first drew

attention in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 275). Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* were hit hard by cold weather in early 1996, but the garden population recovered in 1997, and was back to full strength by 1998. Ringing has shown that the Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* visiting our gardens in winter come from southern Germany. Reports of them in Garden BirdWatchers' gardens have, however, dropped from about 23% in 1995 to barely 12% in 1998. What will 1999 bring?

Despite so many volunteers already hooked on this survey, still more are always needed, so, if you would like to get involved, contact Andrew Cannon at the BTO on 01842 750050.

Bird Illustrator of the Year

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103. It's a serious matter, this judging business: Bird Illustrator of the Year judges, Alan Harris, Keith Shackleton, Tim Sharrock and Bruce Pearson, at work, Bedfordshire, March 1999 (*Robert Gillmor*).

The results of the judges' deliberations will be published in next month's issue of *British Birds*.

Portuguese Atlas: all your records are needed

The Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA), together with the Institute for Nature Conservation (ICN), is co-ordinating a *New Atlas of Breeding Birds* in Portugal.

The project started this year. The fieldwork will be carried out during the next four years and will last from 15th March to 15th July. The methodology is similar to that used in Britain and Ireland

(details can be obtained from the address given below). The Atlas will use a 10 x 10 km grid and will cover the Madeira and Azores archipelagos for the first time.

The execution of this huge project calls for the participation of everyone interested. Thus, all ornithologists and birdwatchers visiting Portugal are invited to send in all their records. The address is: SPEA, Rua da Vitória 53, 2o Dto, 1100 Lisboa, Portugal.

Airing a problem

Have you ever watched one of those balloon releases so beloved of events' organisers and wondered what happens to all the spent balloons? They may be great fund-raisers and publicity stunts, but could spell disaster for wildlife and the environment. The Marine Conservation Society has announced, in its winter 1999 issue of *Marine Conservation*, that it has joined forces with the RSPCA, the Tidy Britain Group (which, it has to be said, are not always wildlife-friendly) and the National Farmers' Union, to campaign for a voluntary ban on balloon releases ahead of

the millenium. They claim that up to 10% of released balloons fail to burst at altitude, that over three balloons are collected per kilometre of coast surveyed for their beachwatch campaign and that partially inflated balloons in the marine environment are probably mistaken for jellyfish or squid by turtles, dolphins, whales and seabirds which consume them, probably causing a slow and lingering death by blocking vital organs.

This sounds like a good start, but surely the net should be spread a bit wider, to encompass other potentially fatal objects discarded thoughtlessly in our throw-away society? How about some other wildlife charities getting involved?

Janet Kear honoured

We were delighted to learn that Dr Janet Kear has been awarded the Union Medal by the British Ornithologists' Union. Her achievements, both professional, with The Wildlife & Wetlands Trust, and voluntary, with, for instance, the BOU itself, are set out in *Ibis* (141: 356). We echo the comment there, that 'rarely can this medal have been awarded more appropriately.' Congratulations, Janet!

Puffin Island cleared of rats

Since March 1998, a project has been underway to clear rats from Puffin Island off the eastern tip of Anglesey. Now, the combined team from the Countryside Council for Wales and the RSPB reports that no signs have recently been found of these rodents, which should be good news for breeding seabirds. The situation will, however, continue to be monitored for some time.

Blackcaps rise, Redpolls fall

Results from the BTO's Constant Effort Sites Scheme, in which ringers visit the same sites up to 12 times over the summer to catch and ring birds following standard trapping methods, show another big increase in numbers of Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* in 1998. There were also statistically significant increases in the number of adults caught for Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. There were, however, significant declines for Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Common Whitethroat *S. communis* and Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*.

Nine species are now at their lowest population levels since the CES started in 1981, comprising five resident seed-eaters: Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Linnet *C. cannabina*, Common Redpoll and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, along with four trans-Saharan migrants: Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler *S. borin* and Common Whitethroat, all going to West Africa, and Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* going to East Africa. Wren, Robin, Blackcap and Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* all had an excellent 1998 breeding season, while Chaffinch, Linnet and Common Redpoll were significantly down, along with Common Whitethroat, Great Tit *Parus major* and Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* which did badly. The BTO has now placed Common Redpoll on its High Alert List.

Beachy Head – never the same again

Few people will have failed to hear about a 150m-high section of Beachy Head in Sussex which unexpectedly fell into the sea over the Christmas period, depositing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of chalk that stretched almost to the offshore unmanned lighthouse. This chalk promontory is, of course, well-known to many birders, but recent events do highlight the dangers of going too near cliff edges in pursuit of that elusive 'little brown job'. Sadly, over the years, a number of birders have met their end in just this way. In

the case of Beachy Head, it is thought that the chalk had been weakened as it dried out during the previous 30-month drought. But, with the large amounts of rain which we have seen recently, smaller, yet no less dramatic, landslides have been occurring in many other places, both coastal and inland. No bird is worth losing your life for, or even risking serious injury, and incautious action may well endanger the lives of members of the rescue services. So, enjoy your birding ... but take care.

Bursaries for ornithological research

The Eric Hosking Trust sponsors ornithological research through the media of writing, photography, painting or illustration. Bursaries of up to £500 are awarded.

In 1998, the Trust awarded two such bursaries: to Nigel Hughes for his return flight to Lima, Peru, where he will complete a long-term project painting all species of

curassow (Cracidae); and to the British Naturalists' Association to fund a special award in its Blake Shield Competition for those aged 16-18.

The closing date for applications is 30th September 1999. Application forms may be obtained from The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust, Pages Green House, Wetheringsett, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 5QA.

Gravel-pit enhancement

St Albans Sand and Gravel Company's 44-ha Amwell Quarry Wildlife Reserve, near Ware, Hertfordshire, has been officially opened by Bill Oddie, with help from a group of local primary-school children. During 1973-90, about 2 million tonnes of aggregate were extracted, but an early decision regarding the pit's long-term future allowed shingle spits and islands to be created into what now forms part of the

internationally important Lee Valley complex of wetland sites. It holds nationally significant numbers of wintering Gadwall *Anas strepera* and Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata* among a total of some 200 bird species recorded. Its reedbeds have been given special attention as part of a wider campaign in the Lee Valley to encourage breeding by Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*.

Lost Lapwings

England and Wales have lost almost half of their breeding Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* according to a joint BTO/RSPB survey. It is thought that the main cause is changing agriculture practices. In 1998, the total breeding population in England and Wales was 65,000 pairs, compared to an estimate of 123,000 in 1987, a drop of 47% in 11 years.

More specifically, Wales has lost about three-quarters of its population, southwest England about two-thirds, Yorkshire and Humberside about one-third and the rest of England about a half. The report concludes that population decline and range contraction of Northern Lapwings is part of a general decline, related to intensification of arable and grassland farming, which may also be responsible for other farmland bird declines. Figures from the BTO/JNCC Common Birds Census suggest that the rate of decline has been accelerating over the last 20 years.

More cash for English Nature

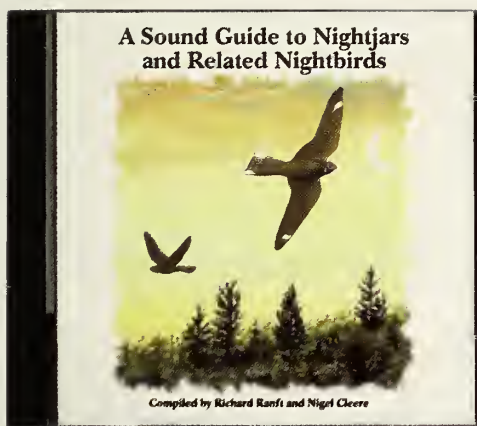
Following criticism from the House of Commons environment subcommittee that English Nature does not have enough money to perform its duties effectively, the Government has responded by raising English Nature's funds from £38.5 million in 1998/99 to £44.6 million in the next financial year. Among the Committee's other recommendations were that the DETR should have less control over the way English Nature spends its money; that EN should have more powers to enter SSSIs and to prosecute those who damage them; that SSSIs should be monitored more rigorously; and that more attention should be paid to conservation in the wider countryside, which at present accounts for less than 20% of total expenditure, and that this should be extended to cover urban areas. Fine words. Let us hope they are put into action.

Nightingale Census

This spring sees a national Nightingale Survey taking place, organised by Andy Wilson of the BTO. The last time that the Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* was censused was in 1980, when 4,770 singing males were located. Since then, comparison of the results in the two breeding-bird atlases (covering 1968-72

and 1988-91) shows that Rufous Nightingales appear to have declined by 30%. The survey is being funded by last year's BTO Nightingale Appeal. If you have any casual records of this nocturnal singer, please contact Andy at the BTO on 01842 750050. Every extra record will help to complete the picture.

REVIEWS



A Sound Guide to Nightjars & Related Nightbirds

By Richard Ranft & Nigel Cleere.
Pica Press, Sussex, 1998. 73 minutes.
ISBN 1-873-403-CD-1. £14.99.

This superb CD must be essential field equipment for anyone interested in nightjars and their allies. Covering 107 species, only 12 short of the World total, this fascinating compilation ranges from the clicks of echo-locating Oilbirds *Steatornis caripensis* to the piercing shriek of Abyssinian Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*. Tracks are generally of such high quality that the guide is an entertainment as much as a tool. It will be particularly valuable in the African, Southeast Asian and South American tropics. It will encourage many (including me!), previously daunted by the inadequacy of pictures and words, to put more effort into finding nightjars, leading to a better understanding of this under-recorded group. Congratulations to Richard Ranft and Nigel Cleere on putting together this guide, and also especially to the intrepid sound-recordists everywhere from the Bornean mountains to the Congolese rain forests.

RODERICK LESLIE

Belize and Northern Guatemala: The Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide

By Les Beletsky.
Academic Press, London, 1998.
488 pages; 104 colour plates and numerous colour photographs and line-drawings.
ISBN 0-212-084811-2. Softback, £19.95.

At last, a single book which helps the visitor to identify all the larger-than-an-insect forms of life likely to be seen – 350 of the most common amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and fish – plus well-written information on distribution, ecology, behaviour, habitats, conservation and ecotourism ethics, with helpful travel notes. The 200 birds are well depicted, despite disturbing differences of scale. Other plates range from familiar mammals, such as Agouti, Paca, Margay, Tayra and Grison, to the less familiar Mexican Caecilian, Mussuranc, Tamandua, Cacomistle, Margate, Graysby, Encrusting Gorgonian, Bulb Tunicate, and even the aptly-named Donkey Dung Sea Cucumber. If you are intrigued, buy the book. A splendid all-round natural-history primer and travel guide.

BRYAN BLAND

Das Sichelhuhn

By Franz Haufner & Alexander V. Andreev.
St Petersburg, 1998. 118 pages,
109 colour plates. ISBN 3-85328-014-5.
Paperback. No price given. (In German, chapter summaries and captions to plates in English.)

A vivid account of a two-year study of the Siberian Grouse *Falcapennis falcapennis* in the

vast conifer forests of eastern Russia. The species is one of the least studied in the Palearctic, perhaps because of the unwelcoming nature of its habitat. This book conveys some of the pioneering spirit of fieldwork, with wonderful photographs of lekking birds and valuable information on the biology and ecology of the grouse,

tracking the seasonal changes in diet and use of habitat. It provides an important baseline for a species with a limited global range, which could easily be threatened by wide-scale development of commercial logging.

JULIAN HUGHES



MONTHLY MARATHON



104. 'Monthly marathon' Photo no. 154. Third stage in eleventh 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules below, then send your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1999.

RULES

1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and *BB* reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by the stated closing date. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All *BB* subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Adland Print Group Ltd. (Members of *BB* Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors – including bird photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition – are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in ten consecutive photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly Marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the event of two or more *BB* subscribers achieving the ten-in-a-row simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer run of correct entries than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.

This month's puzzle picture (plate 104) is the third stage in the eleventh Monthly Marathon sponsored by SUNBIRD.

The first two stages were plate 48 in the April issue and plate 75 in the May issue, for both of which the closing date is 15th June 1999. The closing date for this third stage (plate 104) is 15th July 1999 (but, on this occasion, it is acceptable for all three

answers to be sent in, *on a postcard, please*, provided that it arrives by the earlier closing date of 15th June).

The identities of the birds in plates 48 and 75 will both be revealed next month. The rules of the competition are given opposite.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



RECENT REPORTS

COMPILED BY BARRY NIGHTINGALE & ANTHONY MCGEEHAN

This summary of unchecked reports covers 5th April to 9th May 1999. The text and photographs relate to unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Thompson Water (Norfolk), 30th April to 9th May; Rostellan (Co. Cork), until early May. **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* At least five along south coast of England and East Anglia, plus at least three in Scilly, one on North Uist (Western Isles), and one at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire). **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* Aberton Reservoir (Essex), 11th-16th April. **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* Bothal Pond (Northumberland), 1st May; Munnoch Reservoir (Strathclyde), 9th May. **American Coot** *Fulica americana* South Walney (Cumbria), 17th April. **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 5th May. **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 2nd-7th May. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* St Mary's (Scilly), 10th-23rd April; Conwy Valley (Gwynedd) at least 29th April to 3rd May. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Islay (Strathclyde), 14th-22nd April; past Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 21st April, then

Cley area (Norfolk), until 9th May. **Bonaparte's Gull** *L. philadelphia* Nimmo's Pier (Co. Galway), 1st-10th May. **Slender-billed Gull** *L. genei* Grove Ferry (Kent), 5th May, then Sandwich (Kent), 6th-8th May. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Bangor (Co. Down), 4th May; near Garinish (Co. Cork), 6th-10th May. **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 28th April. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire), 17th April; Anglers CP (West Yorkshire) and Pugneys CP (West Yorkshire), both 18th April; near Finstown, Mainland (Orkney), 3rd May; same, or possibly another, Odness, Stronsay (Orkney), 3rd May. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway), 6th May. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* St Mary's, 17th-23rd April; Hastings CP (East Sussex), 19th-24th April. **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus brehmii* Portland (Dorset), 29th April to 9th May; another, Start Point (Devon), until 9th May. **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* near Aberdeen (Grampian), 30th April to 1st May. **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Copeland Bird Observatory (Co. Down), 25th April.



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105. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*, Cley, Norfolk, April 1999 (Alan Tate)



106. Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*, Swithland, Leicestershire, April 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



107. Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Weybourne, Norfolk, May 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



108. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Clumber, Nottinghamshire, May 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



109. Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Cleethorpes, Lancashire, April 1999 (Iain H. Leach)



110. Three Common Cranes *Grus grus*, Unst, Shetland, April 1999 (Wendy Dickson)



111. Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii*, Portland, Dorset, May 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



112. Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*, Grove Ferry, Kent, May 1999 (Mike McDonnell)



113. Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Hayle, Cornwall, February 1999 (Dave Nye)



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BEST BIRD BOOKS OF THE YEAR

All books voted 'Best Bird Book of the Year 1983-98' (listed in full in *British Birds* January 1999) are available POST FREE. Please order here, giving title(s) and author(s), or on an additional sheet.

(Please note: 1986 *Shorebirds* (1998 reprint), 1988 *Wildfowl* (1999 reprint) & 1992 *Kingfishers* all now £29.99. 1987 *Atlas of Wintering Birds* is currently out of print)

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Higgins (ed.) *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* vol. 4 *Parrots to dollarbirds* (OUP) 1248pp, 54 colour plates, distribution maps. £125.00 ☐

SPECIAL OFFERS

del Hoyo, Elliot & Sargatal *Handbook of the Birds of the World* vol. 5 *Barn Owl to Hummingbirds* (Lynx)

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Regret no offers on individual volumes 1, 2, 3, & 4.

Ehrlich, Dobkin & Wheye *The Birdwatcher's Handbook* (OUP)

Flegg & Hosking *Eric Hosking's Classic Birds* LIMITED EDITION (HarperCollins)

Harrison, Allen, Underhill et al *The Atlas of Southern African Birds* (2 volumes) (Birdlife South Africa)

£89.00 (thereafter £110.00) ☐
£445.00 (thereafter £550.00) ☐

(was £8.95) £5.00 ☐

(usually £50.00) £28.00 ☐

(usually £120.00) £96.00 ☐

NEW THIS MONTH

Beletsky *Belize and Northern Guatemala: the ecotravellers' wildlife guide* (Academic Press)

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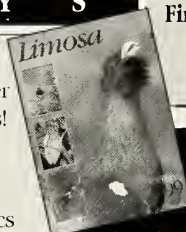
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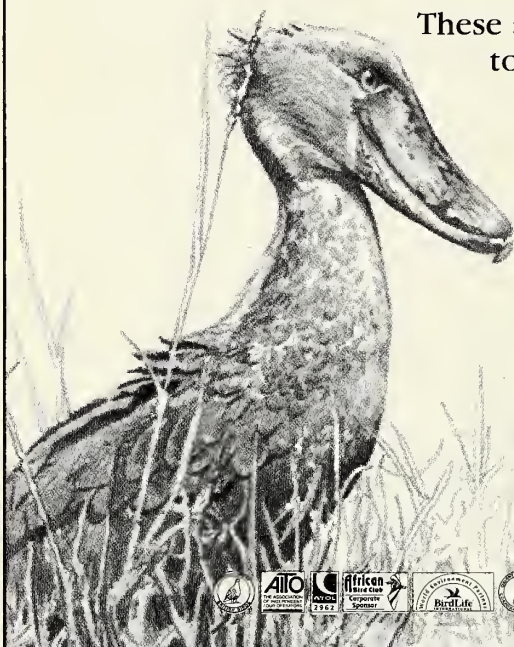
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Authors will receive proofs for checking which they are required to return promptly. Authors of main papers (but not notes or letters) will receive ten free copies of the journal (five each to two or more authors). Further copies may be available on request in advance, but will be charged for.



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